The Mystery of Suffering

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# *The Mystery of Suffering*

*BY*

*J. H. BROOKES, D. D.*

Fifth Edition

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TO

THE LOVING AND TRUE AND QUIET WIFE,

WHO FOR FORTY YEARS HAS SHARED THE LABORS,

SMOOTHED THE PATH, AND SOOTHED THE SORROWS, OF

HER HUSBAND,

NEVER FAILING IN HER DUTY TO HIM OR TO HER CHILDREN,

NEVER FALTERING IN HER DEVOTEDNESS TO HER LORD,

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY

INSCRIBED.

# PREFACE

TO THE

# FOURTH EDITION.

Old age generally brings with it deepened experience and enlarged observation of human suffering. Besides the increase of personal infirmities, there is continually the knowledge that pain and poverty, sickness and sorrow, toil and trouble everywhere abound. The friends of earlier life have disappeared, the expectations of youth have perished, the emptiness of earthly ambition has been fully demonstrated; and unless one has been taught to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," he is ready to exclaim in "the words of the Preacher, the son of David, King in Jerusalem, . . . I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit," Ecc. I. 1, 14.

Those who have reached the highest eminence are the best witnesses to the truth of this testi-

mony. Bismarck, before he was deposed from the greatness of his position, although he could not be deposed from the greatness of his intellect, wrote to a young man, "I have reaped endless anxiety, worry and disappointment; and were it not for the hope of a better life beyond the grave through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, I do not see how this life could be endurable." It is a blessed privilege to point some of the suffering ones to the sufficiency of that grace for their utmost need.

It has pleased the Lord to own the testimony of this little book to the comfort of many sick and sorrowing saints. Scores of letters have been received, telling of the light it has cast upon dark providences, and of the peace it has brought to troubled hearts. Some too have confessed that it has delivered them from the monstrous delusions of Christian Science, as it is falsely called, and from the dangerous error of believing that faith is the sure preventive of disease, or the infallible remedy for illness.

Hence this fourth edition is sent forth with gratitude to God for the measure of service it has thus far rendered to his tried children, and with prayer that He may still use it to help others who are struggling in the deep waters of affliction. Men by plausible arguments may hold out mock-

ing hopes of escape from bodily ailments and sore bereavements; but until Jesus comes, those who trust in His grace will discover that unto them it is given in His behalf, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for his sake. Their consolation will be found, not in exemption from pain and grief, but in the strength and sweetness of His abiding presence. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away," they often walk weeping, but never alone.

> "Sad, silent, and slow,
> Like a funeral train,
> They are led by the hand
> Over mountain and plain."

St. Louis, 1894.

# THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING

## CHAPTER I.

### *Suffering the Common Lot.*

In a very ancient and inspired book it is written, "Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."* In the same book it is said, "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble;"† while a Psalm of about the same period, containing the sublime and touching prayer of Moses, the servant of God, breathes forth the confession, "The days of our years are three score and ten; and if by reason of strength they be four score years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."‡

* Job v, 6, 7. † Job xiv, 1. ‡ Ps. xc, 10.

The truth of this testimony is never called in question. Many deny the fact of a divine revelation, and many at least doubt the existence of a divine Being, but all recognize the universal reign of sorrow and suffering. These seem to inhere in our very nature, and sooner or later, in one form or another, they come with the certainty that marks the obedience of material objects to the laws imposed on them for their government. The child is introduced into the world with a most pathetic wail, amid the travailing throes of the mother, more or less severe, and the tear that is so often seen upon the face of a corpse attests that the brief pilgrim journey begins and ends at Bochim.*

> "'There is no God,' the foolish saith,
> But none, 'There is no sorrow;'
> And Nature oft the cry of faith
> In bitter need will borrow."

Nor are Christians exempt from this inexorable law. On the other hand they, whatever may be true of others, shall surely be called to listen to the voice of the rod.

*Judg. ii, 5.

Not alone to the first disciples did Jesus say, "In the world ye shall have tribulation."* Not only to the early believers did the apostle testify by the Spirit, "that we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God."† Suffering is the badge of sonship, and the birthright portion of heirship, for "if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons;"‡ and "we are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."§

The words spoken by our Lord when He was upon the earth should not be forgotten: "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. And He said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."‖ Then connect these words with another statement that is as true to-day as it was when it fell from His blessed lips: "If ye were of the

*Jno. xvi, 33. †Acts xiv, 22. ‡Heb. xii, 8. §Rom. viii, 17. ‖Lu. ix, 22, 23.

world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also."*

It is strange, then, that so many of His followers manifest a sad surprise in the presence of suffering. With His example and warning before us we may not expect a complete escape from its power, nor should we even desire entire exemption in this mortal state from its rule. We are so thoroughly identified with Him that what He is we are, and what He has we have. He represented us on the cross, and it is becoming that we should drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism. All the waves and billows of God broke over His head, and we are not to complain if some of the spray falls upon our feet. He not only suffered for us and as us, but He gives us the privilege of suffering with Him and for Him. When this thought once

*Jno. xv, 19, 20.

gets possession of the believer's mind and heart, he can exclaim with Paul, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up that which is behind of the affliction of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church."*

His personal sufferings are over, but His sufferings in His people will continue "till He come." There is the most intimate union and communion between them. He is the Head, and they are the body. He is the Bridegroom, and they are the bride. So real and sweet is the oneness that together they are called "the Christ"† While, therefore, our sufferings cannot in the least degree make atonement for sin, nor obtain the slightest merit of supererogation, which would be a foul dishonor cast upon His finished work, it is blessed to know that the Church may enter into "the fellowship of His sufferings."‡ She is the partaker of His everlasting joy, and she should not think it hard if for a little while she is the sharer of His sorrow. She is only asked to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, who was for six hours

*Col. i, 24. †Cor. xii, 12. ‡Phil. iii, 10.

in the unutterable agonies of crucifixion, made to be sin for her, leaving but one brief hour for the bride to accomplish the perfect number of seven.

Perhaps it is easier now to understand how it can be written to the children of God, "unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake."* We suffer for Christ's sake not only when we encounter the hatred of the world as He did, but when we endure the ordinary afflictions of life in which the Man of Sorrows so largely shared. Thus as members of the human race we have part in all the ills to which the human flesh is heir, and over and above these we are subject to a class of sufferings which can attach to none but those who belong to Christ. Unto them it is given, or as the word literally means, it is graciously given, not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for His sake. It is a special mark of God's favor, and faith accepts it as such.

Hence the exhortation of the Holy Ghost is worthy of the most serious attention: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the

*Phil. i, 29.

fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings;" "Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethern that are in the world."* Alas! we are prone not only to think it a strange thing when we are tried, but to fret and worry, forgetful of the fact that the afflictions which are universal, and are fixed in amount and character, have an appointed end. They are being rapidly accomplished in these last days, and every pang that rends the heart of the troubled Christian, every tear that courses down the cheek of the sorrowing, is so much taken from the fragment that remains.

When suffering, therefore, and ready to conclude that none ever bore a heavier burden, it is well to recall the words, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."† After all, the sorest trial

*1 Pet. iv, 12, 13; v, 9. †1 Cor. x, 13.

is such as is common to man, and it is a comfort to know that others, who have stood the same tremendous strain, have quit the strife more than conquerors, as we too shall through the all-sufficient grace of a faithful God.

"Careless seems the great Avenger: History's pages but record
One death grapple in the darkness 'twixt false systems and the word;
Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne;
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."

## CHAPTER II.

### *The Cause of Suffering.*

"As Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind. Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."* It is needless to say that our Lord did not mean to affirm the entire sinlessness in every respect of this man and of his parents, for He could not flatly contradict His own testimony everywhere else, nor could He deny the testimony of His Spirit, who says, "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not;"† "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."‡

But here grace shines in contrast with Jewish notions of retributive justice. The

* John ix, 1-3. † Ecc. vii, 20. ‡ Rom. iii, 23.

eye of the sympathizing Saviour looked beyond nature, even beyond the outward relation of cause and effect, to the true and ultimate reason for the blindness in this particular instance, and He saw in it only an opportunity for the Christ of God to work the works of Him that sent Him. It is true that He forbids man in his spiritual blindness and sin to sit in judgment upon his suffering fellow-man, lest he fall into the condemnation of Job's three friends.* It is true that in the case of Job, and the man born blind and many others, suffering becomes a dark platform for the bright exhibition of divine mercy and infinite tenderness; but we must never forget that sin is the great primeval cause of all the evils that afflict our race.

He, therefore, who would fathom the mystery of suffering, about which much is written in these days, must first fathom the mystery of sin. The scientists may speculate as they please concerning the condition of the "pre-Adamite earth," but inspired Scripture is explicit in the statement that if there had been no sin, there had been no suffering. "By one

*Job xlii, 7, 8.

man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,"* death in Bible language standing for the penal consequences of sin. Again it is written, "sin hath reigned unto death,"† and hence death is not the tribute we pay to nature, as men say, but the tribute we pay to the dread sovereignty of sin. "By man came death," and "in Adam all die."‡ Deep down in the heart lies the root of the evil, for "when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."§

It is to be feared that many Christians have been led away by the delusions of Satan, and by the "oppositions of science falsely so called,"|| to regard suffering as an unavoidable adjunct of our physical and mental constitution. They seem to think of God as an ancient Egyptian king, bound hand and foot within his own splendid mausoleum, instead of a divine and personal Architect outside of the structure. He is not tied down by the laws of His creation, and it is obvious that no

*Rom. v, 12. †Rom. v, 21. ‡1 Cor. xv, 21, 22. §James i, 15. ||2 Tim. vi, 20.

irreversible decree was laid upon Him to bring into the world a being who must necessarily suffer and die. He called into existence rank upon rank of angelic intelligences, who feel no pain and shed no tear, and He could have caused man to walk on the earth in the bloom of immortal beauty and youth.

But sin entered into Eden; and "unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children;" while "unto Adam He said, Because thou has harkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field: in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."* Such is the narrative God gives to explain the mystery of suffering, and has any more reasonable account ever been devised

*Gen. iii, 16-19.

by the human imagination? The suffering all admit, and it is here by chance, or by fate, or by the rigid demand of uncontrolled laws, or by the appointment of a holy God, who assigns to it a suitable and satisfactory cause.

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die."* "The wages of sin is death."† Without pretending, then, to trace the connection in individual experiences between the sin and the suffering, it may be said in general that the former is the fruitful and horrible parent of the latter. Hence, every groan that shakes the bosom is a sorrowful protest against the injustice of sin; every pang that rends the frame is a swift witness to the frightful evil of sin; every grave that has upon it a mound of earth, or even a stately monument, is an outstanding demonstration of the monstrous wrong inflicted by sin. Ah, suffering one, if you saw this in its true light, you could not complain, like so many, that you know not what you have done to deserve such suffering. If the question of suffering is to be settled by the question of deserving, alas! hell must be the enevitable portion of us all.

*Ezek. xviii, 4. †Rom. vi, 23.

But there is another aspect of the subject that should not be wholly overlooked. In the redemption of man the grace of God reigns, but the government of God rules. When David confessed his shocking sin in the seduction of Uriah's wife and in the murder of her faithful husband, the prophet said to the penitent monarch: "The Lord also hath put away thy sin," but he further said, "Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from thine house."* Grace could forgive, and the sinner was saved, but the wheels of government must roll on, and the sin be visited. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap,"† is an unchangeable law both in the natural and in the spiritual world, touching both the unbeliever and the believer. Whatsoever a man soweth, whether he be a Christian or an infidel, that shall he also reap, although any guilt attached to the former is entirely removed by the precious blood of Christ.

If, for example, the former carelessly or wilfully inhales a malarial atmosphere, or takes poison, or violates the laws of health,

*2 Sam. xii, 10, 13. †Gal. vi, 7.

he need not expect a miracle to deliver him from the consequences of his own misconduct. Or, if in earlier life he was dissipated and licentious, and in various ways undermined his strength, he must not be surprised to find that he reaps as he sowed, even while trusting with adoring gratitude the word of his Lord who says: "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins."* Boundless mercy is exhibited in dealing with the sinner, but righteousness must be vindicated in dealing with the sin. "A just God and a Saviour"† is the name of Him who interposes to save us from utter and everlasting ruin.

The proclamation which He made of Himself to Moses is very striking: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation."‡ Men

*Isa. xliv. 22. †Isa. xlv, 21. ‡Ex. xxxiv, 6, 7.

may quarrel with the doctrine, but they cannot deny the fact. They see it illustrated every day around them; and a wise sufferer in pondering the mystery of suffering will also consider the mystery of sin. Even if his suffering is the inherited result of ancestral sin, inflicting an incurable disease, he will not become bitter and hard, but rather praise the infinite grace and wisdom that can make what is regarded as a dreadful misfortune an occasion for the manifestation of God's tenderest love to his soul. Then he can say and sing with Coleridge,

> "See Him no other than He is;
> Give both the infinites their due—
> Infinite mercy, but I wis
> As infinite justice too."

Especially will he bow to the mercy of God in dealing with the sinner, and to His justice in dealing with sin, when he remembers that the Sinless One walked the path of suffering in obedience to the claims of both, and that he must walk the same path, if he hopes to shine in His image at last. "The voice of Jehovah calleth to the city, and wis-

dom shall see thy name; hear ye the rod, and Him who appointed it."*

Is there no other way, O God,
  Except through sorrow, pain and loss,
To stamp Christ's likeness on my soul,
  No other way except the cross?

And then a voice stills all my soul,
  As stilled the waves on Galilee;
"Canst thou not bear the furnace heat,
  If 'mid the flames I walk with thee?

"I bore the cross, I know its weight,
  I drank the cup I hold for thee;
Canst thou not follow where I lead?
  I'll give thee strength—lean thou on Me."

* Mic. vi, 9.

## CHAPTER III.

### *Bodily Suffering.*

All who believe in the providence and word of God recognize His hand in sickness or other physical ailments and discomforts. The Lord Jesus did not exaggerate in the least when he said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."* Nothing apparently is more casual than the tossing of pebbles into a cap or urn, and yet even these are under divine direction. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."† A soldier in the tumult of battle "drew a bow at a venture," but it sped to the accomplishment of Jehovah's predicted purpose.‡ Joseph's brethern threw him into a pit,

*Matt. x, 29, 30. †Prov. xvi, 33. ‡2 Chron. xviii, 19-33.

from which he emerged to enter a dungeon, but God sent him before them to preserve life.*

The omnipresence, the omniscience, the omnipotence, the very existence of God makes it certain that He touches everything everywhere, whether with or without secondary causes; and any other view is as unphilosophical and unscientific as it is unscriptural. It is absurd, therefore, to suppose that sickness or any bodily suffering comes upon us by accident, or by the iron rule of a natural law that knows no master, and has no object. Sometimes it is sent as a chastening. "The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick."† It was well with the child, for it was safely sheltered in the bosom of Him who struck it, but the blow was designed to reach the father's heart. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."‡

The intervention of natural law does not

*Gen. xlv, 5. †2 Sam. xii, 15. ‡1 Cor. xi, 30-32.

in the least obscure His hand, according to the plain testimony of the Holy Spirit of truth. "It came to pass about ten days after, that the Lord smote Nabal, that he died."* "David said furthermore, as the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him."† "The Lord smote the king, so that he was a leper unto the day of his death."‡ Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah: and the Lord struck him, and he died."§ "Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled; Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust."‖ "Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."¶ Thus it is all through the Bible, and he who reads the book of God with an understanding heart must see His presence and power in every form of disease, whether commissioned to minister to the good of His people, or sent to punish the proud and unbelieving.

Men are ready to accept a general providence, while denying a particular, as if there

*1 Sam. xxv, 39. †1 Sam. xxvi, 10. ‡2 Kings xv, 5.
§2 Chron. xiii, 20. ‖ Ps. civ, 29. ¶ Acts xii, 23.

could be any general without particulars, or as if little things were not essential to the production of great results. They admit that God brings about the revolution of kingdoms, which rise and fall like corks stuck with feathers in the game of shuttlecock, but they do not perceive that no event, connected with the end in view, can fly beyond the bounds of His providence. He, however, is very explicit in asserting His control of all occurrences, either by His positive or permissive decrees. "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal."* "The Lord killeth and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich: He bringeth low and lifeth up."† "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"‡ "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?"§

Nothing more, perhaps, need be said to those who bow before the authority of the

*Deut. xxxii, 39. †1 Sam. ii, 6, 7. ‡Dan. iv, 35.
§Amos iii, 6.

sacred Scriptures to convince them that their bodily afflictions, no matter how sore they may be, are to be traced directly or indirectly to the will of God. Why He permits them is another question, and what Christians are to do, when smarting under His stroke, is a question of very great importance, especially in these days. There are thousands of godly and sincere people who insist that the prayer of faith, if followed by anointing with oil, will rebuke and remove disease, and hence that all medical or remedial agencies should be discarded, because their use implies a lack of confidence in the power and willingness of God to heal. Many of them claim, and no doubt truthfully, that they have been cured of divers maladies in answer to prayer, and they do not see why the benefits they have received should not be extended to others, and, indeed, to all sufferers.

But if we would calmly and intelligently consider this subject, which is of vital moment to the sick, it must not be forgotten in the first place that similar claims, substantiated by abundant evidence, are put forth by those with whom the Christian can have no

fellowship. Spiritualists, manifestly led by Satan, point with triumph to the numbers healed of deadly diseases by mediums. Christian Science, so called, that is not Christian, but wholly devilish in its blasphemous assertions and teachings, can tell of thousands who have been restored to health by their mutterings. Heaps of abandoned crutches, and other memorials of conquered disease at Lourdes, France, attest the reality of the benefit received by the pilgrims who crowd together for healing from the Virgin Mary. Scores of educated men and women bear witness to the healing power wielded by an utterly fanatical sect, known as "Overcomers," and marvelous cures are constantly reported as emanating from similar sources.

Of course it is not intimated that these indisputable facts disprove the genuineness of the cures wrought by the instrumentality of brethren who stand on much higher and holier ground. But they show that the believer should not be moved from Scripture by mere success. Long ago it was ordained that if a prophet give a sign or a wonder, and "the sign or the wonder come to pass," his prophecy

was to be despised and he himself put to death when he turned the people from the Lord.* He tells us that the time is coming when false Christs and false prophets "shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect;"† and in the last days, under the Anti-Christ, the false prophet "doeth great wonders, so that He maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by those miracles which He hath power to do in the sight of the beast."‡

In the second place, most of the cures wrought by faith-healing, as it is called, are of a nervous and hysterical character. Persons of morbid temperament can easily imagine that they have spinal disease, or cancer, or tumor, or consumption, or any other malady; and to them it is a horrible reality for a time. Anything that will take their minds away from themselves, and lead them to believe that restoration is possible, is usually an effective remedy. But a true child of God would rather be sick than resort to methods that dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ, and are con-

* Deut. xii, 1-5. † Matt. xxiv, 24. ‡ Rev. xiii, 13, 14.

trary to his word. Nor will he permit pious frauds, perpetrated in the interests of a theory, to go unrebuked. Thus when a person arose in a great faith-healing meeting, and declared that a diseased eye had been removed from his head, but as a result of his faith and anointing God had put a new eye in the empty socket, and healed the other eye, which was almost blind, every honest man, and particularly every Christian present, ought to have denounced the impostor.

In the third place, our faith-healing brethren as a general thing go too far or they do not go far enough. They lay great stress upon the power the Lord gave His apostles to heal the sick, but the commission extends much beyond this. "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons."* "In My name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."† Those who claim supernatural power in the exercise of

*Matt. x, 8. †Mark. xvi, 17, 18.



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faith do not pretend to cleanse the lepers, to raise the dead, to cast out demons, to speak with new tongues, to take up noxious serpents, to drink poison; and yet surely they ought to be able to do these things as well as to heal, if they are acting under the apostolic commission.

In the fourth place the cures wrought by the Lord Jesus and the apostles were instantaneous and complete. There was no slow and imperfect recovery, as with nearly all modern faith-healers, nor were there any failures except in one instance of unbelief, when a father brought his son, grievously tormented by a foul spirit, to the disciples "that they should cast him out, and they could not."* But the failures in the faith-healing of our day are vastly in excess of the number cured. The public knows only of those who have been restored to health, while perhaps every experienced pastor in the country is acquainted with some who have resorted in vain to this method of restoration. Probably not one in one hundred receives any permanent benefit from the professional faith-healers, and the disappointed sufferers are tempted to despair, lest the

*Mark ix, 18.

failure is to be found in their want of faith.

In the fifth place, the gift of healing is not bestowed upon all, as generally believed and taught. It is plainly written, "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another faith, by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit. . . . Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?"* Admitting, then, that the gift of healing was not confined to the times of the apostles, but that it might be bestowed now if there was faith to receive the power, it does not follow that every one has the gift, or that every sufferer can be relieved. Therefore the assertions so often heard or read that anybody who has faith can heal or be healed, is utterly unscriptural, as is the common disregard of the injunction, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."†

*1 Cor. xii, 8, 9, 29, 30. †Jas. v, 14.

A devout man or a pious woman, going about to call for the sick and to anoint them often unsolicited, can by no possible stretch of the imagination be converted into the elders of the church. Oil was not only an emblem of the Holy Ghost, but it was a remedial agent constantly employed at that time; nor need the intelligent Christian fear that he is sinning against God in the employment of human remedies, when he remembers that an inspired prophet commanded a plaster of figs to be used for the recovery of a sick king;* and that an inspired apostle directed a tired and exhausted preacher to drink no longer water, but to use a little wine for his stomach's sake and his often infirmities.†

In the sixth place, in praying for the sick it is easy to lose sight of an essential feature of prayer. The Son of God could pray, when His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and as if He would give a touching example to His suffering followers, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: never-

*Isa. xxxviii, 21. †1 Tim. v, 23.

theless not what I will, but what thou wilt."* "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He heareth us."† Without submission to the will of God as infinitely right and infinitely wise, prayer is not prayer; and one is often shocked by an exhibition among the faith-healers of a rashness and irreverence of demand that would

> "Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,
> Re-judge His justice, be the god of God."

A pastor at an early period in his ministry was summoned to visit a young mother, who was in unutterable grief and distress by the dangerous illness of her little boy. The servant of Christ tried to console her, and at length kneeled beside her quivering form and beside the cradle to pray. He asked the Lord that if it were possible, if at all according to His will, if it was best for the sufferer and best for the mother, He would spare the child. She grasped him by the arm in the midst of the prayer, saying, "I did not send for you to

* Mark xiv, 36. † 1 Jno. v, 14.

pray in that manner. I care not what God's will is; my will is that he shall live. I will not, oh, I will not give up my child." Strange to say, the child recovered; and the same mother lived to learn that the same child was swung from the gallows for murder. Let us understand, as a first and fundamental principle of truth, that the Lord's will is always best; and though we may not be able to hear His voice when distracted by pain, nor to see His meaning when blinded by tears, He is still saying, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."*

In the seventh place, even the apostles could not always heal, nor were they exempt from the law of bodily suffering. At one time Paul was so used to restore health "that from his body were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and evil spirits went out of them."† At another time he writes "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick."‡ At one time he shook a viper that had fastened on his hand into the fire and felt no harm.§ At another

*Jno. xiii, 7. †Acts xix, 12. ‡2 Tim. iv, 20.
§Acts xxviii, 3-5.

time he writes: "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness."* It may be good to be strong, but it is better to have the power of Christ tenting over us and around us in our weakness. It may be good to be in health, but it is better to have the sweet promise fulfilled, "The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."†

A beloved brother, greatly owned in his service and testimony, said not long ago, after more than a year's absence, "Since I last saw you I have passed six weeks upon a bed of sickness, and I would not exchange them for any six weeks of my entire life. Oh, God brought me so near to Himself that, like Paul, I almost heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible to utter. The revelations of His compassion and tenderness were such that I could readily believe He will not only turn our

*2 Cor. xii, 7-9. †Ps. xli, 3.

bed, but, as the martyred Bishop Hooper tells us, 'rather than it should be undone, He will wash the dishes and rock the cradle. I learned more of Him and more about Him in those six weeks than ever before." Yes, sickness is a rough but thorough teacher of experimental theology, and it almost compels the soul of the believer to stay itself upon God. During Dr. Payson's last illness a friend said to him: "I am sorry to see you lying upon your back." "Do you know why God puts us on our backs?" asked the smiling sufferer. "No," was the answer. "In order that we may look upward."

While, therefore, it is perfectly proper to pray about sickness, and to pray with a faith that is no faith unless it is in accordance with God's will, let us remember that sickness is not the worst thing that can befall a Christian. For eighteen hundred years all Christians have passed through death, and millions of them through a death of violence. We are doing no wrong when we pray for ourselves or for others, "Lord, if it please Thee, show Thy healing power;" but we are certainly doing right when we pray: "Father, glorify Thy name."*

*Jno. xii, 28.

"Yes, ask it for ourselves, if we need healing,
Pleading those instances of olden cure;
But if He then refuse, we still will trust Him,
And He will make it happier to endure.

"Ay, happier to bear with Him the suffering,
Or even death itself, with Him close by,
For in His presence there is joy forever,
And with Him near, it is not death to die."

He has purposes of love to accomplish through disease and pain, of which we may know nothing at present, and while still praying in the simplicity of an unfaltering confidence, we are not to suppose that His omnipotence is a mere servant to obey our behests, apart from His holier and wiser counsels. If nothing else was gained by our sickness, it teaches us our need, for "they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."* It is when shut up in the sick chamber the Christian begins to sing with new meaning:

"The Great Physician now is near,
The sympathizing Jesus."

Whether, then, in active or passive service, let it be our aim to do or suffer the will of God. We read of some "who through faith subdued

*Matt. ix, 12.

kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Of others we read that they "were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."* Suppose ye that the sufferers of this second class were less acceptable to God, or less dear to His heart, than the doers of the first class with their magnificent achievements? Nay, if there was any difference, they were nearer to Him, as a loving parent always feels a special tenderness for his afflicted children. They obeyed His will, and did their appointed

*Heb. xi, 33-38.

work, as truly and as well as their brethren in the field of battle. The sorrowing and silent and submissive children of our Father shall soon find to their everlasting joy, that

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

"I cannot say,
Beneath the pressure of life's care to-day,
I joy in these:
But I can say
That I had rather walk this rugged way,
If Him it please.

"I cannot feel
That all is well when dark'ning clouds conceal
The shining sun:
But then I know
God lives and loves; and say, since it is so,
'Thy will be done.'

"I cannot speak
In happy tones; the tear-drops on my cheek
Show I am sad;
But I can speak
Of grace to suffer with submission meek,
Until made glad.

"I do not see
Why God should e'en permit some things to be,
When He is love;
But I can see
Though often dimly through the mystery,
His hand above.

"I may not try
To keep the hot tears back; but hush that sigh,
'It might have been:'
And try to still
Each rising murmur, and to God's sweet will
Respond—AMEN."

## CHAPTER IV.

### *Mental Suffering.*

Trouble of heart is not less common than bodily disease, and often it is harder to endure than physical pain. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity: but a wounded spirit who can bear?"* Few have reached the middle period alloted to human existence without the distress that arises from disappointed hopes, misplaced affections, the desertion of old friends now alienated and embittered, the loss of social position, or the humiliations of poverty. Fewer still have escaped the overwhelming and lasting sorrow that floods the soul, when the ruffian hand of death snatches away some one that is far dearer than life itself. It is then, if never before, the stricken sufferer understands the meaning of the words, "The heart knoweth

* Prov. xviii, 14.

his own bitterness;"* and, "by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken."†

He returns from the graveyard to his desolate home, and the sight of the vacant chair makes him sob and shudder. The sound of voices grates harshly upon his ear, and often he hurries away to be alone with God and with his grief. He is sure that he can never smile again. He wonders that the sun shines. He is amazed that people can talk and laugh on the streets, and that the hum of business does not cease forever. Time and the soothing touch of an unseen hand will at length quiet his outward agitation, but he carries with him to the close of life a memory that will not down even at his bidding. Suddenly the absent one will come back to him in reading, in speaking, in writing, and especially at night just as he is falling asleep, startling him from his half slumber, and renewing the anguish of an hour that is past, and yet not past, and never can be past, through all the sad years that remain.

No complaint may fall from his lips, and no murmur may rise in his breast, but he can-

*Prov. xiv. 10. †Prov. xv. 13.

not forget. He may say with the Psalmist, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it;"* and with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him";† but he cannot sing until he has recovered from the stunning blow that felled him to the earth. He resumes the duties that were dropped for awhile, and takes up the burdens that were heavy enough before, but he knows that he is to be more lonely than he was formerly. He goes into society, and sometimes shakes off the weight that is on his spirit into sweet oblivion, but over and over in the rattle of conversation and pleasantry sounding around him, the truth of the familiar lines is illustrated:

> "At our old pastimes in the hall
> We gambolled, making vain pretense
> Of gladness, with a dreadful sense
> Of one mute shadow watching all."

There are other forms of mental suffering, not so trying, and yet the sources of serious discomfort, as the pain that is inflicted upon many a Christian by unbelieving members of the same household. Just before these lines were

*Ps. xxxix, 9. †Job xiii, 15.

written, a young lady said with tears in her eyes: "Physical pain is nothing to the distress I endure day by day." She is the only Christian in her family, and except when she attends the meetings of believers for prayer or preaching, she is constantly surrounded by a circle of ungodly acquaintances and kindred. If she were an infidel nothing would be said, unless in admiration of her intellect and intelligence; but since she chose Christ as her portion she is forced to encounter the badinage and raillery and feeble wit of those who hate her Saviour.

It is a common but very great mistake to suppose that human nature and the world have changed a particle in their essential characteristics. It is as true now as it was eighteen hundred years ago, that "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God."* It is as true now as it was then that "the whole world lieth in the evil one."† The deep-seated enmity of the heart and the malice of Satan may not assume the same mode and manifestation of hostility, but they are always arrayed and united in opposition to Christ. He meant

*Rom. viii, 7. †1 Jno. v, 19 (R. V.).

what He said when He declared to the disciples, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted Me they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also."*

The fact that many professing Christians are not hated nor persecuted by the world does not disprove the truth of our Lord's testimony; it only proves that the professing Christians have gone over to the world, and the world sees nothing in them to hate. It was not a falsehood the Holy Spirit uttered, when He caused it to be written, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,"† and if the persecution is not endured it would be well to ask the question, whether we are living godly in Christ Jesus? There are other persecutions besides the dungeon, the rack, the stake or the den of wild beasts;

*Jno. xv, 18-20. †2 Tim. iii, 12.

and there are thousands of Christians in so-called Christian lands who are encountering these subtler and equally torturing persecutions. Even at this present time children are frequently disinherited and disowned because they have confessed Jesus as their Lord, and many a long-suffering wife could tell of a faith maintained in the face of ridicule and sneers and cruel calumnies. "What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper."*

To these must be added the suffering that comes from malignant misapprehension of our motives, from the censorious judgment of those we trusted, from the slander in which vast numbers, who claim to be Christians, indulge as freely as if the cowardly sin were not sternly condemned in the word of God.

There is no exemption from inward trouble any more than from bodily ailments, and the intelligent believer is bound to recognize the hand of Providence in the former as in the latter. He can enter into the spiritual knowledge that led David to say of the

*Ps. cxx, 3, 4.

abusive Shimei, "So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David."* He can understand the meaning of Jehovah's exclamation, "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. . . . Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?"† He can feel the force of the Saviour's words to Pilate, even when face to face with the worst enemy, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above."‡

It is needless to say that grief caused by the ravages of death is to be directly traced to the will of our Lord. "He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death,"§ whether we regard the deliverance He gives as from death, or in death or by death. He has fixed the number of our months, and determined the bounds we cannot pass, so that each believer can say for himself, and as he thinks of the beloved ones taken away, "All the days of my ap-

*2 Sam. xvi, 10. †Isa. x, 5, 15. ‡Jno. xix, 11.
§Ps. lxviii, 20.

pointed time will I wait, till my change come."* Once the devil held the keys of death,† but after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, we hear Him saying, "I am the living One, who became dead; and behold, I am living unto the ages of ages, Amen; and have the keys of death and of Hades."‡ It is certain, therefore, that the dark iron door behind which our darlings have passed could never have been opened, until He swung it back to welcome them home. But as He called, so He alone can comfort. Vain is the help of man. All words of human sympathy, however well meant and however grateful to the feelings, seem but a mockery of our agony; and from the kindest of earthly physicians must come a sad negative to the question,

> "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased;
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow;
> Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
> And, with some sweet oblivious antidote,
> Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart?"

Meanwhile, if we are shut up to the necessity of suffering, let us at least learn to

* Job xix, 5, 14. † Heb. ii, 14. ‡ Rev. i, 18.

suffer in silence, not forgetful of the unnumbered mercies received from Him who smites.

"And if, sometime, commingled with life's wine,
We find the wormwood, and rebel and shrink,
Be sure a wiser hand than yours or mine
Pours out this potion for our lips to drink;
And if some friend we love is lying low,
Where human kisses cannot reach his face,
Oh! do not blame the loving Father so,
But bear your sorrow with obedient grace.

"And you shall shortly know that lengthened breath
Is not the sweetest thing God sends His friend,
And that sometimes the sable pall of death
Conceals the fairest boon His love can send.
If we could push ajar the gates of life,
And stand within, and all God's workings see,
We could interpret all this doubt and strife,
And for each mystery could find a key."

## CHAPTER V.

### *Satan and Suffering.*

The mystery of suffering will never be fully explained in this world, but we cannot even view it aright, unless we see the connection with it of that foul and malignant and personal being called "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan."* From the time of Adam's entrance into Eden his hateful presence has been manifested on the earth in unceasing efforts to destroy the souls and bodies of men, and if not permitted to destroy, then to disturb their peace. Not only did he succeed in seducing our first parents from their allegiance to God, but he has ever since continued his relentless war upon the race, tempting and troubling in every way that infernal ingenuity can suggest, and terrible power can execute.

Thus we find him in early days bringing

* Rev. xx, 2.

upon the patriarch Job great and almost intolerable calamities. Some of the smart ones now tell us that Job was a fictitious character, but the Holy Ghost by a prophet and an apostle* informs us that he really existed, and the Spirit of God knows more than the higher critics, who probably know less than nearly anybody. Others insist that he did not really lose his children and property, but such brethren need to heed the divine admonition, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit."† Job was a person, and Satan is a person to whom the Lord delivered His servant for awhile, saying to the deceitful and dreadful adversary, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand;" and again, "Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life."‡ Frightful trials followed, that shook the soul of the afflicted man as storm after storm broke over him, but it is blessed to know that God said to the vindictive foe, as He says to the raging sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."§

*Ezek. xiv, 14; Jas. v, 11. †Col. ii, 8. ‡Job i, 12; ii, 6. §Job xxxviii, 11.

We next see the monster leading the man after God's heart to the commission of an audacious sin. "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."* The King knew that God had said, "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel, after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them when thou numberest them."† This sum was called the atonement money of the children of Israel, and it formed the very foundation of their tabernacle worship. David, therefore, in his self-sufficiency, was treating the atonement with contempt, and of course the threathened plague fell. In like manner it was said to the Corinthian Christians, when they failed to recognize the atonement in the Lord's supper, "for this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep;" but it was Satan who instigated a denial of the great and essential truth.

Hence he appears as the adversary of God's people, resisting their plea for accept-

*1 Chron. xxi, 1. †Ex. xxx, 12.

ance before the throne, and demanding the sentence of condemnation because of their unworthiness. Thus the prophet was taught the central doctrine and fact of Christianity when the angel showed him "Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"* The representative of the people was clothed with filthy garments, but he stood before the angel of the Lord, the Christ who afterwards died upon the cross; and one person who is named Lord invoked a rebuke upon the adversary from another person called Lord, causing the iniquity of Joshua to pass from him, and clothing him with change of raiment suitable for the presence of Jehovah. But the scene reveals the deadly hostility of Satan to the atonement, and his baffled attempt to bring suffering upon the objects of redeeming grace.

In the New Testament we find more fre-

*Zech. iii, 1-4.

quent allusions to this arch enemy of God and man, and to the untiring efforts he is ever putting forth to mislead and injure. He dared to assail the Lord Jesus in the wilderness, and, mark it, if he is not a person, if the temptation was only a conflict raging in Christ's bosom as some of the foolish ones say, then we have a Saviour who Himself needs to be saved, for He was a sinner.* But no, Satan came as a person to attack the sinless Saviour; and it is of a person He speaks when he says of the bowed woman, "whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years."† It is a person who is mentioned when it is written, "then entered Satan into Judas Iscariot,"‡ who had already cherished the dark suggestion of betrayal.§ It is a person to whom our Lord referred when he said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath obtained permission to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."||

After the crucifixion we find that Satan filled the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy

*Matt. iv, 1-10. †Lu. xiii, 16. ‡Lu. xxii, 3.
§Jno. xiii, 2, ||Lu. xxii, 31.

Ghost.* The commission of Paul to the Gentiles was "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."† The same apostle warns his brethren, "lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices;"‡ and if false teachers transform themselves into apostles of Christ, it is "no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."§ The devoted servant of the Lord desired again and again to visit the Thessalonians, "but Satan hindered us,"‖ he writes; and the coming of anti-Christ in the last days "is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders;"¶ while it was the grief of the apostle's heart, going forth after his erring brethren, that "some are already turned aside after Satan."**

Under the title of devil or accuser, the same terrible and treacherous being is represented as seeking to destroy the souls and bodies of men. Jesus said to the Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a man murderer from the

*Acts v, 3. †Acts xxvi, 18. ‡Cor. ii, 11. §2 Cor. xi, 14. ‖1 Thess. ii, 18. ¶2 Thess. ii, 9. **1 Tim. v, 15.

beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."* Peter testifies to Cornelius that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil."† Paul writes, "Neither give place to the devil;"‡ and "put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."§ He warns us against pride, lest we "fall into the condemnation of the devil;"|| while James tells us to "resist the devil, and he will flee from us;"¶ and Peter reminds us that "the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."**

No doubt enough has been said to convince any one who accepts the truth of the Bible that this horrible being is no mere creature of a superstitious imagination, nor a ludicrous bugbear of childhood. That he is a person, and a person always contriving to produce suffering, is as certain as divine revelation. Why

* Jno. viii, 44. † Acts x, 38. ‡ Eph. iv, 27. § Eph. vi, 11.
|| 1 Tim. iii, 6. ¶ Jas. iv, 7. ** 1 Pet. v, 8.

God permits him to exist, and gives him a certain latitude and liberty, like a chained dog, is one of the mysteries of sin and suffering, for the solution of which we must wait until the end of the days. He will surely injure us if he can, and although we may not be able to trace his footsteps through the maze of natural laws and unforeseen circumstances that bring about our sickness or sorrow, it would be well to be always on our guard, and to watch and pray against his assaults.

We know beyond question that "if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not;"* and "he that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning."† But it is added, "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil;" and while walking in fellowship with the Son of God, we need not in the least fear the foul fiend. He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world, and has already gained the victory and pronounced judgment

*2 Cor. iv, 3, 4. †1 Jno. iii, 8.

on the prostrate foe. We have only to tread in the footsteps of the Conqueror, and to rejoice in the promise, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."* "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."†

In the fiercest conflict and thickest gloom, when faith is shaken by strong gusts of temptation, and hope is well-nigh gone, it will strengthen us to remember that "the Captain of our salvation" has already met and defeated the foe.

"The night is chill, my hands are very weary,
Yet through the darkness to Thy cross I cling,
O thou who suffered there! Redeemer! Saviour!
Cast me not off, a weak and guilty thing.

"Heal me, and take me: Thou hast purchased dearly
Thy ransomed ones from out the Tempter's hand:
One drop of blood that falls from off Thy forehead
Shall buy my freedom, and I rescued stand.

*Rom. xvi, 20. †Luke, xi, 21, 22.

"Though clouded oft, the sun shines on forever;
I know Thy grace and glory are divine;
I need divinity to give me succor;
There is no arm to save but only Thine.

"Bare, then, that arm, O Helper and Restorer!
Satan is clutching me from off my hold!
Snatch me a smoking brand from out the burning:
Thine be the glory, as in the days of old!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### *The Trial of Faith.*

"Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time; wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."*

Faith is one of the seven precious things Peter is led by the Spirit to mention, but here

* 1 Pet. i, 3-7.

it is the trial or testing of faith. Observe, it is not the question of salvation he is raising. Those whose faith is tried are already begotten again by the much mercy of God unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance in substance incorruptible, in purity undefiled, in beauty amaranthine or unfading, and they are guarded by all the plentitude of omnipotent power on their way to complete salvation in the heavens. Yet, for a little time, not long, they are in heaviness or sorrow, when God sees a "needs be" for it, that this trial of their faith, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. He is coming again, and the gold separated from the dross by the fire will shine very brightly in the splendor of His throne.

Surely, if Christians knew the meaning of the trial their faith is called to endure, there would be less hopeless grief when the flames are kindled about them. We might think of gold all but invisible, mingled with hard rock and dirt, thrown into a furnace, and bitterly complaining, if it was conscious, of the fierce fire. "Oh, why am I tortured thus?" it might

say. "It is only for a season," the refiner would reply, "and you must wait patiently until the end before you can see the purpose of your suffering." "But when will the end come? I cannot bear this agony." "Just as soon as I behold the reflection of my face in the molten mass, you will be released from the furnace, and when you are made into a crown meet to be worn by a king at his coronation, or formed into a setting for the diamond that shall flash on the brow of his queen, you will understand what you are now compelled to take upon faith alone." "The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts."* He is saying to believers in general, as He says to Israel in particular, "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on My name and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God."†

Hence the apostle is directed by the Spirit to write, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." It

* Prov. xvii, 3. † Zech. xiii, 9.

is not, when ye run into divers temptations, but when ye fall into them, and it is not that the temptations are in themselves the source of all joy, but because the trial of faith worketh endurance. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried [or approved], he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."* Instead of rejoicing, as we are told to do, many Christians fret and worry, and become sullen under the trial of their faith, and when reeling and staggering beneath the burden, imagine that they cannot be the children of God, if His face is obscured behind the dark cloud. Sometimes faith stands the test, and is strengthened by the strain; but they may still be the children of God, although for a time led under the sore trial to doubt His goodness, His justice, His mercy, nay, it may be, His very existence. Hundreds of the most saintly and sincere men are so agitated by doubts, they are compelled again and again to go over the whole ground of the evidences of God's personal being, and the truth of Christianity, for their own satisfaction.

The temptations to doubt, causing the trial

* Jas. i, 3, 4, 12.

of faith, spring from four quarters. First, they arise from within. As long as we are in the body, the nature which is called "the flesh," to distinguish it from the nature that is imparted by the Spirit, will be in us as the restless source of temptation and trial. It was not an unconverted but a converted man who confessed, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. . . . I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me."* It was not to the unsaved but to the saved it was written, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh; for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit."† Faith is forced, therefore, to face an evil beast in our own breasts. There are those who boast that the fleshly nature no longer exists within them, but the vaunt is an idle dream or satanic delusion, nor can it be supported for a moment except by lowering the claims of divine holiness, or by palliating the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It will be there to the end of the journey.

Second, the world is a constant and mighty

*Rom. vii, 18, 21. †Gal. v, 16, 17.

trial of faith. Thousands "are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection."* Besides its allurements, and anxieties, and business, let us not forget that Jesus says of His disciples, "I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."† Every real believer knows that the cross has snapped the link that bound Him to the world, and that the separation is as wide as that made by a two-fold crucifixion, leading Him to say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified unto me, and I unto the world."‡ If, therefore, the prince of the world cannot entice the Christian by the attractions of the world, he will excite against him the wrath of the world, evermore seeking to blind his eyes to the solemn truth of God's word, "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."§

Third, thus another source of sore trial is the malice of Satan to which, as shown in the

* Lu. viii, 14. † Jno. xvii, 14. ‡ Gal. vi, 14. § Jno. ii, 16.

last chapter, believers are peculiarly exposed. He is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," the head of a vast host of foul spirits and of a widely extended machinery of evil, so that "we wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against spiritual bands of wickedness in the heavenlies."* So malignant and so numerous are the demons subject to his control, that a legion of them took possession of one wretched creature;† and the professing Christian is a madman who dismisses from his mind the distinct testimony of the Scriptures concerning their existence and numbers with a laugh of unbelief or sneer of contempt. They are getting him just where they want him. Remember that it was the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison that ye may be tried."‡

Fourth, another way by which faith is tried is affliction. Sometimes the blow is so severe and the pain so sharp we cry out with the Psalmist, "Will the Lord cast off forever? and

*Eph. ii, 2; vi. 12. †Mark v, 9. ‡Rev. ii, 10.

will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?"* Sometimes we are ready to exclaim with poor Israel in her centuries of weary wanderings, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me,"† and "in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow,"‡ we do not wonder that Job and Jeremiah cursed the hour that gave them birth.§ From the lips of millions of true Christians has the exclamation burst forth in anguish, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and billows are gone over me,"‖ and none ever had a perfectly smooth voyage to the other side. God had one Son without sin, but not one son without suffering.

It may be that when He calls us to endure heavy losses, and the heaviest loss of all in the death of our children, He wants us to have fellowship with Himself in the surrender of His Son unto death. Such at least seems to be His meaning in His language to Abraham, "Take

*Ps. lxxvii, 7, 9. †Isa. xlix, 14. ‡Isa. xvii, 11.
§Job. iii, 1; Jer. xx, 14. ‖Ps. xlii, 7.

now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."* He is apparently thinking of Himself, and if He had not given grace to His servant, the test would have broken his heart. But "by faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac."† His faith reached beyond death, and took hold of resurrection, as ours must do when there is nothing but darkness before us, leading us to sing of God's afflicted children in the mystery of their suffering,

> "Behold, we know not anything:
> We can but trust that good shall fall
> At last, far off, at last to all,
> And every Winter change to Spring."

We do, however, certainly know that we are in the hands of One of whom it is written, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver," and that when His work is done, His meaning will be made clear.

*Gen. xxii, 2. †1 Heb. xi, 17.

"'Tis sweet to feel that he who tries
The silver, takes his seat
Beside the fire that purifies,
Lest too intense a heat—
Raised to consume the base alloy,
The precious metals, too, destroy.

"'Tis good to think how well He knows
The silver's power to bear
The ordeal to which it goes;
And that with skill and care
He'll take it from the fire, when fit,
With His own hand to polish it.

"'Tis blessedness to know that He
The piece He has begun
Will not forsake till He can see—
To prove the work well done—
An image by its brightness known,
The perfect likeness of His own.

"But ah! how much of earthly mould,
Dark relics of the mine,
Lost from the ore, must He behold—
How long must He refine,
Ere in the silver He can trace
The first faint semblance of His face?

"Thou great Refiner! sit Thou by
Thy promise to fulfil;
Moved by Thy hand, beneath Thine eye,
And melted at Thy will.
O may Thy work forever shine
Reflecting beauty pure as Thine."

## CHAPTER VII.

### *Christ and Suffering.*

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same."* *Likewise* is a compound word, made up of *very* and *near to,* or as some render it, *close by the side of,* or as Wetstein says, *"in absolutely the same manner."* He therefore became truly a human being, "made like unto his brethren," and knows precisely how to feel for them, "for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."† The word *succor* is also a compound word, meaning, according to Parkhurst, *to run on occasion of a cry,* and it represents the Saviour in the attitude of a tender mother ever on the watch and ready to run to the relief of her sick or suffering child at the first faint sound of distress, at the first sob of loneliness or terror.

*Heb. i, 14. †Heb. ii, 18.

This opens the way to another passage of equal comfort and sweetness: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* This is the first time in the Bible that a high priest is ever called "great," and it is remarkable that our Lord should be thus described in connection with the sufferings of His people. The phrase, "touched with the feeling of," is, in the original, but one word, occurring but once elsewhere, and there it is rendered *had compassion.*† It is the word from which our English word *sympathy* comes, and the statement is, that we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, for He was tempted in all points like as we are, and yet from the beginning to the end He was the sinless One.

No man has a right to say that the inspired Scriptures exaggerate the truth in the slightest degree, or to talk, as some of the commentators

* Heb. iv, 14, 15. † Heb. x, 34.

do, of "sublime hyperbole." It may be said that we do not understand how Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, but do we understand any better how the eternal God became a babe on the bosom of the virgin mother, or how "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree?"* He bare our sins and all the sins of all the countless millions of His people of all centuries and all lands, making them His own when He died upon the cross, and he bare our weaknesses too, making them His own, yet without sin. As God "made the iniquities of us all to meet on him,"† so he made the sorrows of us all to meet on him. In a manner unknown to us, He gathered up the various temptations that try the faith of His followers and friends, and pressed them to His heart, that He might respond to their griefs and groans along the sensitive link of a personal experience.

"He took the suffering human race:
He read each wound; each weakness clear:
He struck His finger on the place,
And said, 'Thou ailest here and here.'"

*1 Pet. ii, 14. †Isa. liii, 6.

When we are bowed to the earth under affliction there is an immense difference between the condolence of those who only know of our trouble and the compassion of others who have borne a similar trial. Two mothers, very intimate and fond of each other for years, were called to share a common sorrow in the loss one of them sustained in the death of a child. Not long afterwards the second buried her own child, and said to her bosom companion, "Once I knew that you suffered; now I feel it." Jesus, as the divine and omniscient High Priest, not only knows the temptations that try us, but He has actually passed through them, and wherever we tread along the pathway of life we find His footprints, and catch the aroma of His personal presence. He is so identified with His people that "in all their affliction He was afflicted;"* and "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."†

This does not and cannot mean, as so often asserted by the faith-healers, that He bare our sicknesses in the same sense, and for the same purpose, in which He bare our sins. In the first place, no such thought is expressed elsewhere

*Isa. lxiii, 9. †Matt. viii, 17.

in Scripture, which from Genesis to Revelation is full of the great truth that He bare our sins, so that His believing people do not bear them. In the second place, all of His people without a single exception, ever since the words were written, have borne sicknesses and death, often in the most horrible form, and therefore if such an exposition is true, the work of Christ has utterly failed. In the third place, if it be said that this was owing to a lack of faith, it is enough to reply that the faith-healers sicken and die like all others. Indeed, it is notorious that some of their leaders resort to medical remedies when they are sick, and that many of them suffer from various physical disabilities. The text obviously means that there was divine sympathy, which entered into the depth of the need Jesus relieved.

It is most important that the suffering children of God should see this, and lay hold of it with as firm a grasp as possible. They will be tempted to think that if He were upon the earth they could go to Him with confidence in His sympathy, but that heaven has removed Him to such a distance, and surrounded Him with such glories, He has forgotten the tribu-

lations of His mortal state. Let them remember for their consolation, that after His ascension into heaven, and after its glories shone around Him above the brightness of the noonday sun, He was still reached by the strokes that fell upon his tried people. He dazzled Saul by the splendor of His appearance, forcing the fierce prosecutor to cry out, "Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest."* He did not say, thou art persecuting My disciples, but thou art persecuting Me, for He keenly felt every blow they received.

So when He comes again in the glory of His Father, and all the holy angels with Him, and sits upon the throne of His glory, and all nations shall be gathered before Him, it will be found that whatever has been done to the least of His brethren has been done unto Him.† Any kindness shown to them is a kindness to Him; any contempt of them is contempt of Himself, "for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones,"‡ so united, so completely one in nature, life, standing, service, suffering, resurrection and glory, there can never be any

*Acts ix, 5. †Matt. xxv, 41-46. ‡Eph. v, 30.

separation, nor any distinction in God's treatment of them, save that He is the exalted head of those who constitute "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."* His own prayer is, "that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved Me";† and herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is so are we in this world."‡

We are not surprised, therefore, to read that "it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering."§ How could the perfect One be made perfect? He was not only absolutely and entirely sinless from His conception and for evermore, but He could not sin.|| He alone of all the human race could say, "The Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him."¶ Over His head alone was the deep silence of heaven twice broken, that the Father might speak down audibly from His throne, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."**

* Eph. i, 23. † Jno. xvii, 23. ‡ 1 Jno. iv, 17. § Heb. ii, 10.
|| Jno. iii, 9. ¶ Jno. viii, 29. ** Matt. iii, 17; xvii, 5.

He "knew no sin";* He was "without sin";† He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners";‡ He "did no sin";§ "and in Him is no sin."|| Still He was made perfect through sufferings. The Christ on the cross was something more perfect than the Christ baptized of John in the Jordan, as a Saviour and a sympathizing High Priest. Perfection was perfected; the exceeding fine gold was gilded with a brighter lustre, and through sufferings.

Is it strange, then, that His people suffer? Would it not be far stranger if they did not suffer? God's love for His only begotten Son is infinite, and yet it was not inconsistent with His boundless love that His Son should be the greatest of sufferers. It cannot be inconsistent with His love to permit trials to come upon His younger children, "for whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren."¶ Shall they be conformed to His image in every other respect but in His tribulations? There is no

* 2 Cor. v, 21. † Heb. iv, 15. ‡ Heb. vii, 26. § 1 Pet. ii, 22.
|| 1 Jno. iii, 5. ¶ Rom. viii, 29.

grosser deception practised upon sick and suffering saints than to tell them that if they have faith they may be exempt from pain and trouble, for the faith of Christ never faltered even once, and still from His borrowed cradle to His borrowed grave He was " a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."* Blessed be His name, He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever,"† and "this same Jesus" shall come again.‡

Better tell them of the inexhaustible sufficiency of His grace, and of His unchanging and unfailing sympathy. Better bid them consider His example when in His agony He said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"§ It was not a caldron, but a cup; it was not a cup sent by chance or ordained by fate, but a cup given; it was not given by an enemy, but by a Father's hand; and if nothing more can be done in our pain and weakness but murmur His name, it will be most acceptable prayer to that Father's heart. A dear old woman in her protracted and wearing sickness forgot all the Scripture she ever knew except the verse, "That I may know Him, and the

* Isa. liii, 3. † Heb. xiii, 8. ‡ Acts i, 11. § Jno. xviii, 11.

power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings."* At last she forgot all of this verse but the word HIM, and day after day, and night after night, she whispered, "Him, Him." Never did sweeter worship ascend to heaven, and we can readily believe that God would rather hear the breathing of that name from the pallid lips of a tired sufferer than to listen to the hallelujahs of angels, or to look upon the small achievements of robust service. The fellowship of His sufferings brings us very near to the Father's heart.

"Precious stones are cut and polished
By the lapidary's skill:
Cruel knife and rasping friction
Work on each the Master's will.
Not until the sparkling facets
With an equal lustre glow,
Does the artist choose a setting
For the gem perfected so.

"Thus I wait the royal pleasure,
And when trouble comes to me,
Smile to think He may be working
On the gem, small though it be.
All I ask is strength to bear it,
Faith and patience to be still;
Held by Him, no knife can slay me,
Trusting Him, no anguish kill."

*Phil. iii, 10.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *The Abiding Comforter.*

"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."* The Comforter or Paraclete is literally "one called or sent for to assist another," and the word so rendered is elsewhere translated Advocate.† But the advocate is summoned as a support, the defender of an accused person before a court of justice. The risen and ascended Jesus is our Paraclete or Comforter or Advocate in the court of Heaven, and the Holy Spirit is another here below to abide with us and to keep us along the journey of life.

Hence we read, "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should

*Jno. xiv. 16-17. †1 Jno. ii, 1.

pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."* The word *helpeth* means "to lay hold of along with another," and the thought suggested is that of a man bearing a burden too heavy for him. The load is becoming more and more oppressive, and he falters and turns faint, and is about to sink under the intolerable weight, when a loving and strong friend steps forward and lifts the burden, and relieves the weary one, and enables him to carry that which seemed like a mountain. Almost crushed, the heavy laden soul cannot pray, but only groan; and yet the groan in dumb, inarticulate language is also a prayer, the fruit of the Spirit's intercession for him and within him.

A pastor frequently visited a child of God who was painfully and slowly dying from cancer. She said to him one day, "I am so racked with agony it is impossible to pray. Even when I rally somewhat from the influence of morphine, my mind is so dazed I cannot put two words together." He looked at her a moment and said, "You can groan, can't you?" "Oh,

* Rom. viii, 26.

yes," she answered, "My days and nights are passed in groaning." "Well, never mind your prayers, then; your groans going up to God reach His ear and heart far more surely, it may be, than the most eloquent address to the throne of grace, for they are the Spirit's intercession in your behalf." One groan borne upward by the Holy Spirit is worth a thousand wordy prayers; and "He that searcheth the hearts," that is, the Lord Jesus Christ,* "knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."† When God, therefore, hears the groan of a suffering Christian, He is but answering the desire of His own heart.

It is most important, however, to grasp the truth that the Comforter is not a vague and undefinable influence, but a divine person, abiding with us forever. He is as truly a person as the Lord Jesus Christ, who always spoke of Him in the use of the personal pronoun, *He* and *Him,* and who associated Him with Himself and with the Father in the ordinance of baptism,‡ as He is associated with the Father and the Son in the apostolic benediction.§ To Him

*Rev. ii, 23. †Rom. viii, 27. ‡Matt. xxviii, 20. §2 Cor. xiii, 14.

are ascribed both in the Old and New Testaments all divine attributes and perfections; and it is He in the plenitude of His grace and love who is with the sick or sorrowing saint day and night. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God;"* and "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His."† This does not mean the disposition of Christ, but the Holy Spirit of Christ as his indwelling and permanent guest.

In the memoirs of Dr. John M. Mason it is stated that while he was President of Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, he was called to endure a very heavy affliction in the death of a beloved son. The stricken father sat with bowed head during the funeral services, but when the pall-bearers at the close took up the coffin to convey the body to the place of burial, he raised his eyes and said, in tones of thrilling solemnity, "Tread lightly, young men, tread lightly; for ye carry a temple of the Holy Ghost." Yes, tired, and weary, and often weeping sufferer, that body of yours, racked with pain and helpless on a sick bed, is the temple

*1 Cor. vi, 19. †Rom. viii, 9.

of the Holy Ghost, nor will He permit it to decay by disease except to rear out of its ruins a far more beautiful and more glorious temple. Meanwhile he is with you every moment, meting out the kind and the degree of suffering best suited to accomplish His own loving purpose.

We often read of the wrath of God, and even of the wrath of the Lamb, but we never read of the wrath of the Spirit, and as Christ is the Head of the Church, so it may be said that the Holy Ghost is the Heart of the Church. He presents the motherly aspect of the divine nature, if the expression may be allowed, and the intelligent Christian at once thinks of Him when his eye falls upon the words, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you,"* nor is he surprised to learn that the early churches had rest, when "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost."† He is so ever present, and so consoling in His gentle ministrations, that the believer can rejoice in tribulations, though they may tear him as a threshing machine, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and pa-

*Isa. lxvi, 13. †Acts ix, 31.

tience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."*

Let the sufferer cherish the sense of the Comforter's abiding presence, and he will better understand the meaning of the precious words, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."† We may not be able for very anguish of body or mind to utter another word, but it is the Spirit's cry in the heart, and like the first muttered "Papa" of a little child, or the wail of a new born babe, it goes to the Father's heart. The Christian Superintendent of a Deaf and Dumb Asylum stated at a Sunday School Convention a little while ago, that a child had been placed under his care by a father who was exceedingly fond of her, and all the more so because of her sad infirmity.

At last he wrote to the official that he could stand the separation no longer; he must see his child. She was informed of his expected arrival, and during the interval was taught, by

*Rom. v, 3-5. †Rom. viii, 15.

imitating the movement of her teacher's lips, to pronounce one word. A carriage drove to the entrance into the grounds; she eagerly watched him as he descended, and throwing open the door, hurried down the walk, her curls flying in the wind, and her eyes sparkling with gladness. He saw her coming, stopped, held out his arms with a bright smile on his face, when she rushed to him, and looking up said, "Father." The Doctor declared that the man rolled on the grass, sobbing and shouting in the rapture of his joy to hear those sweet, dumb lips utter that one word.

Tried and troubled one, the mystery of suffering will begin to be clear if under the promptings of the Comforter you will cry, perhaps with tears, Abba, Father. The night before Dr. Chalmers was absent from the body, and present with the Lord, he was overheard by some of his family, while he was walking in the garden, saying again and again, "Oh, my Father, my heavenly Father." The old man and the great man was becoming a little child once more, as it always is with a true Christian when he approaches the end. He sees clearly

that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink," or external display, or forms and ceremonies, but "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,"* and he readily enters into the longing of the apostle's prayer, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."†

It all comes to believing at last, not seeing, nor feeling, nor trying, but believing; and then hope springs up through the power of the Holy Ghost. It is His teaching that leads the children of affliction to say, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."‡ It is not that all things shall work, as it is often quoted, but do work, are working; and it is not that we see it, or feel it, but we know it upon the sure testimony of God, confirmed to us by the ever abiding Comforter. It is that Comforter who is saying now, as of old, and as truly now as then, "Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good;"§ and even He can use no stronger beseeching in exhorting

*Rom. xiv, 17. †Rom. xv, 13. ‡Rom. viii, 28.
§Ps. lxxxv, 12.

to continual prayer, than "the love of the Spirit."*

"O Comforter of God's redeemed,
Whom the world does not see,
What hand should pluck me from the flood
That casts my soul on Thee?
Who would not suffer pain like mine,
To be consoled like me?

"When I am feeble as a child,
And flesh and heart give way,
Then on Thy everlasting strength
With passive trust I stay;
And the rough wind becomes a song;
The darkness shines like day.

"It is not hard to bear by faith,
In Thine own bosom laid,
The trial of a soul redeemed,
For Thy rejoicing made:
Well may the heart in patience rest,
That none can make afraid.

"Deep unto deep may call; but I
With peaceful heart will say,
Thy loving kindness has a charge
No waves can take away:
Then let the storm that speeds me home
Deal with me as it may."

*Rom. xv, 30.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *The God of All Comfort.*

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ."* He is the God of all comfort, the source of every kind of consolation we receive now and for ever; and the last verse intimates that the suffering we endure is the natural and necessary result of His Son's suffering on the cross. Elsewhere He is described as the "God that comforteth those that are cast down."†

The word *comfort* in these passages is the one from which Paraclete is derived, and hence the glorious God is pleased to reveal Himself

*2 Cor. i, 3-5. †2 Cor. vii, 6.

as called to the side of His children who are in trouble, that He may render them needed help. He sends both the trouble and the help, and therefore the Psalmist says, "Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side."* Again he writes by the Spirit, "Cast thy burden [margin, gift, that which He has given thee] upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee,"† the word *sustain* being also rendered in other places, *bear, feed, guide, nourish, provide* and *receive*. Thus, when God gives a burden, it is that we may roll it upon His strong arm, and we look up with the cry, "Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction; for Thy word hath quickened me."‡

He not only comforts, but He sympathizes with those upon whom He lays the rod. Thus we read, "Comfort ye, Comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem."§ Here the first definition of the word *comfort* is "to sigh, to mourn, to grieve over, to

*Ps. lxxi, 20, 21. †Ps. lv, 22. ‡Ps. cxix, 49, 50. §Isa. xl, 1, 2.

feel compassion for, to pity," while the word, "Speak *comfortably*" is, literally, "Speak to the heart." He expects the tenderness of His own heart, when He sends the rod of gentle chastening, to reach the heart of His suffering child, and drive away all fear. The Son of His love has taught us that two sparrows were sold for a farthing, and so cheap and worthless were they that if a man bought four, the seller threw in another for nothing; "and not one of them is forgotten before God. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."* To His disciples, in the midst of great perils and privations, He said, "There shall not a hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls."†

A pastor often visited an old saint eighty-seven years of age, who for fifteen years was bed-ridden and blind. She was usually very bright and cheerful, but on one occasion she told him that since his last visit she had been in terrible darkness. When he inquired how it came, she replied that she had been informed of the sudden death of a youthful and useful Christian lady, who was a near neighbor. She

*Lu. xii, 6, 7. †Lu. xxi, 18, 19.

began to wonder why God spared her so long, when she was of no service to anyone, and then the thought darted into her mind that He had so many people to look after, He had forgotten her, and, "Oh, the horror that rolled over my soul at this," she exclaimed. "But you are out of the darkness now; how did you get out?" he asked, "There is but one way," she answered, "and that is by going to the Word. I remembered that the Lord Jesus declares all the hairs of our heads are numbered, and although I once had children of my own, whom I loved, I suppose, as much as most mothers love their children, and although I washed their faces for them, and brushed their hair many a time, I never thought enough of one of my children to count every hair on its head. Since my Father thinks enough of me to count every hair on my old gray head, I told the devil to go away and let me alone, and he has left me in peace."

Think of the way in which the God of all comfort addresses Himself to the necessities of His suffering children. Are you old, oppressed with sad memories, and utter loneliness and gloomy forebodings? "Even to your old age I am He: and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have

made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."* Are you troubled? Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind [margin, thought or imagination] is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is the Rock of Ages."† Are you hungry? "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that give suck."‡ Are you weary? "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint."§ Are you afraid? "Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness."|| Are you thirsty? "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them, I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the

* Isa. xlvi, 4. † Isa. xxvi, 3, 4. ‡ Isa. xl, 11.
§ Isa. xl, 31. || Isa. xli, 10.

valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."* Are you in the midst of stormy seas and fierce flames? "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."† Are you fighting? "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."‡ Are you tempted? "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him,"§ margin, "put him to flight."

These are a few of the promises taken from a single book of the Bible, and there are more than thirty thousand similar promises which the God of all comfort gives in the Scripture, and which may be appropriated by His suffering children, according to their need, and according to the decision of His infinite wisdom, and unchanging love concerning their best interests in this world, and the world to come. Never yet was a check of faith drawn on His boundless

*Isa. xli, 18. †Isa. xliii, 2. ‡Isa. liv, 17. §Isa. lix, 19.

resources to be dishonored, although the return from His treasure-house may not have been just the kind we desired or expected.

> "When God would teach mankind His name,
> He calls Himself the Great I AM,
> And leaves a blank—believers may
> Supply those things for which they pray."

Well then, may burdened Christians send forth the bold challenge, "If God be for us," or "Since God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"* That is, all things that He can give consistently with His purpose in the gift of His Son. A lady whose health was shattered, and whose husband had lost his money, complained one day to a servant of Christ that God was harsh in His dealings with her. While they were talking her sleeping baby awoke, and she took it up to quiet its cries. A bright fire was blazing in the grate, and he suddenly inquired, "What enemy is so dear to you, or what interest is so great in your estimation, that in order to serve the one, or to secure the other, you would put your babe into that

*Rom. viii, 31, 32.

fire?" She looked at him a moment with an expression of surprise and indignation, and replied, "You know perfectly well that I would not cast my child into the fire for any consideration whatever."

"And yet," he said, "God cast His only begotten and well beloved Son into the fire. God spared Him not, though He saw His deep humiliation, though He beheld Him weltering in bloody sweat in Gethsemane, though He witnessed His frightful agonies on Calvary, and still you doubt His goodness." Surely the greater gift includes the less, and he who really believes that God's love for him was so great He gave His Son to the death of the cross, can easily believe that God's love for him is infinite, even when calling him to listen to the voice of the rod. God's love for His Son was never greater than when those cries of distress went up at midnight from the garden, and His love for His sons is never greater than when they complain, with sick Hezekiah, "I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me."*

*Isa. xxxviii, 13.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" We may suffer every kind of privation and trouble, and at last be killed, but does this put an end to the love of Christ? "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us."* When we beat an enemy we are conquerors, but when the enemy becomes a friend we are more than conquerors. When we endure tribulation and distress and other forms of trial without a murmur, we are conquerors; but when we know that God compels them to do our bidding, to obey our behest, to minister to our welfare, to kneel at our feet, and ask how they can serve us, we are more than conquerors, or as the word may be rendered, very far more than conquerors, and all through the unchanging love of Christ.

It is a love so deep and tender that it secures His constant presence at every step of our journey through an unfriendly world. "Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the age."† He has not forgotten His promise. "I

*Rom. viii, 35-37. †Matt. xxviii, 20.

will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;"* or, I will not, not leave thee, neither will I not, not forsake thee, or I can not, I will not forsake thee; no, indeed. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."† The word *abode* occurs but once elsewhere, and there it is rendered *mansions,* as if the indwelling of the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit were just fitting the man who keeps Christ's words, perhaps by tribulation and distress, for a statelier place in the Father's house with its many mansions.

We may be sure that the power and the presence and the immutable love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit will secure us against any suffering that is not absolutely necessary. If nine hundred and ninety-nine aches and pains will answer the purpose, we shall not have a thousand. If a thousand hot tears coursing down our cheeks will accomplish the end the God of all comfort has in view, we shall not have a thousand and one. We do not know what is best for us, but He

*Heb. xiii, 5. †Jno. xiv, 23.

does, and we can say with the prophet, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in Thine anger, lest Thou bring me to nothing."* Out of the word that liveth and abideth for ever comes the sweet response to this prayer: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."†

In view of this, surely some light is shed upon the mystery of suffering, when we see that sorrow at least furnishes the dark background on which the God of all grace shows His sufficiency for all our need, and the platform for the manifestation of patient submission to His will. It is obvious also that those who suffer according to His will are doing His will, not less truly than those in the field of active service, and shall fully share in the reward to be given at the coming of Christ

* Jer. x, 23, 24. † Pet. v, 10, 11.

Jesus. "As his part is that goeth down into the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike."*

If the suffering children of God would recognize the dignity and greatness of their calling, and the truth that "the Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet,"† they could press through the tempest to His bosom, finding how true it is that

> "There is a point of rest
> At the great centre of the cyclone's force,
> A silence at its secret source:
> A little child might slumber, undisturbed,
> Without the ruffle of one fairy curl,
> In that strange central calm amid the mighty whirl."

Let them remember that when their Lord was on the earth, He not only rebuked the roaring winds and raging waves, but muzzled the sea,‡ as the Greek word means, and that He still lives to muzzle our afflictions, lest they go too far. We may be made to weep, but Faith will look up with the cry, "Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle: are they not in Thy book?"§ Yes, they are all in His bottle, pre-

*1 Sam. xxx, 24. †Na. i, 3. ‡Mark iv, 39. §Ps. lvi, 8.

served before His throne; and then, as if He feared that some of them might be lost, they are recorded in His book. Every one of them will sparkle like a gem in the crown of the sufferer's rejoicing, at "our gathering together unto Him,"* and every page upon which they were entered will be luminous with the splendor of His grace and glory.

"When we touch the shining strand
Where the waiting angels stand,
In the far-off Fatherland,
We shall know,
In the happiness unending
Of a blissful comprehending,
What our life-work meant below.

"In the fullness, deep and wide,
Weary souls, by sorrow tried,
Knowing, shall be satisfied
In His rest:
Finding, in the perfect sweetness
Of an infinite completeness,
That God's ways are always best."

*2 Thess. ii, 1.

## CHAPTER X.

### *The Everlasting Arms.*

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."* This was spoken primarily of Israel, but it is equally true of all God's people in every age and in every land. The arm is the symbol of power, and the arms of Jehovah never grow old nor feeble. Israel, unconscious of His presence and unmindful of His promise, has been borne for twenty-five hundred years, since the Babylonian captivity, upon these strong and everlasting arms, and this is the only way to account for the preservation of the Jews amid the fiery persecutions of centuries, and the tremendous temptations to merge their identity with other nationalities. The same everlasting arms are underneath the suffering believer in Jesus, and thus, and thus only, is he kept and upheld.

* Deut. xxxiii, 27.

First, it is a redeeming arm. "Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm."* Afterwards it was shown that the redemption was by blood, and the arm was the mere instrument to put into effect the purpose of God's sovereign grace. "The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."† The real redemption, therefore, took place when the blood was sprinkled, and the arm was stretched out to defend those who were delivered from death. God did not say, when you see the blood, but when I see the blood; nor did He say, when I see your good feelings, your repentance, your resolutions, your baptism, your efforts, but, when I see the blood. The blood alone made them safe; the word alone made them sure; and the feeblest child, the most timid woman, was

*Ex. vi, 6. †Ex. xii, 13.

as truly sheltered under the blood, and as far beyond the reach of the destroyer, as were Moses and Aaron.

It is most important for the afflicted Christian, who ponders the mystery of suffering, to see that the question of his redemption is already settled. If he thinks that God is calling his sins to remembrance, or that he is working in pain for his escape from the curse, there can be no comfort for him. He must accept as true the testimony of the Holy Ghost, "Christ HATH redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."* "In whom we HAVE redemption, through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."† "Forasmuch as ye know that ye WERE redeemed from your foolish conduct, transmitted from your fathers, not by corruptible things, as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."‡ So precious is that blood, the very shadow and type of God's lamb redeemed Israel, and "much more then, being NOW justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."§ The ever-

* Gal. iii, 13. † Eph. i, 7. ‡ 1 Pet. i, 18, 19. § Rom. v, 9.

lasting arms are underneath us, only because Christ by His own blood "entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."*

Second, it is a saving arm. "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favor unto them."† God Himself says, "My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people: the isles shall wait on me, and on mine arm shall they trust."‡ Amid the shameful failures and apostasy of Israel, and the guilt and ignorance and helplessness of the Gentiles, "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it sustained Him."§ Jonah might pray and quote Psalms, but not until he could say, "Salvation is of the Lord,"|| did the Lord speak to the fish, and send forth His poor servant out of the belly of hell, out of the midst of the seas, from the

* Heb. ix, 12. † Ps. xliv, 3. ‡ Isa. li, 5. § Isa. lix, 16. || Jno. ii, 9.

compassing floods, and from the overwhelming billows and waves, and wrapping weeds at the bottoms of the mountains.

So it is still; the suffering Christian must be brought to the end of his own resources, and learn the difference between doing and done, between trying and trusting. As long as we are occupied with ourselves, it is impossible to obtain peace, but when we turn our eyes without to the finished work of Christ, the storm of agitation ceases, and there is a great calm. We must understand once for all the meaning of the angel's announcement to Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He Himself shall save His people from their sins."* We must see that the One "who is the outshining of the Father's glory, and the exact impress of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."† We must accept the testimony of the word that, apart from any aid we could render, and independent of any assistance from the Church or any other creature, "by grace are

* Matt. i, 21. † Heb. i, 3.

[WERE] ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."* Then, and not until then, do we receive the chastening of a Father's hand, as a correction sent to those who "ARE the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,"† already "passed out of death into life,"‡ already saved because "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree."§

Third, it is a strong arm. "Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy right hand."‖ Well might the question be asked of Job in his distress, "Hast thou an arm like God?"¶ It called his attention away from his own weakness to the omnipotent arm of God, on which he ought to have leaned his whole weight in the day of his calamity. Thus too, our attention is called to the contemplation of "the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the energy of the strength of His might, which he wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies."** He is there controlling all the

*Eph. ii, 8. †Gal. iii, 26. ‡Jno. v, 24. §1 Pet. ii, 24
‖Ps. lxxxix, 13. ¶Job xl, 9. **Eph. i, 19, 20.

affairs of this world, directing all the events of the believer's life, and permitting no trial to befall His blood-bought people, except as it may execute His own loving design. To know this is to enter into the joyful experience of the apostle, who did not grimly endure sufferings because he could not avoid them, but triumphantly exclaimed, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distress for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."*

Fourth, it is a scattering arm. "Thou hast scattered Thine enemies with Thy strong arm."† When the Israelites started upon their journey across the pathless desert, the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them to search out a resting place, while the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day. "And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee."‡ At least twenty times in the prophecy of Ezekiel alone it is announced that the same Israelites, once so happy and

*2 Cor. xii, 10. †Ps. lxxxix, 10. ‡Num. x, 35.

prosperous, shall be scattered among all the nations of the earth for their iniquities; but the scattering arm of the Lord can compel the evils that scatter the true followers of Christ to promote His glory and the good of His people. Thus in the fierce persecution that scattered the Church at Jerusalem, "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."* Our ascended Saviour holds in His imperial hand the sceptre of universal empire, and "a King that sitteth on the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes."†

Fifth, it is a gathering arm. "Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattereth Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock."‡ No wonder the prophet adds, "Upon this I awaked, and, beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me." Over and over from Deuteronomy to Malachi, this future gathering is affirmed in the plainest and most positive and unconditional manner, and the spiritual exposition which

* Acts viii, 4. † Prov. xx, 8. ‡ Jer. xxxi, 10.

applies it to the Church, or finds its fulfillment in the return of a remnant from the Babylonian captivity, seems like little less than trifling with God's word. The same truth is taught in the New Testament, where our Lord declares that "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*

Meanwhile we read of another gathering, as when Caiaphas unconsciously prophesied that "Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but also that He should gather together in one the children of God scattered abroad,"† so that "there shall be one flock and one fold under one shepherd."‡ Our Christian life begins with our gathering together unto Him by faith, and it ends with our gathering together unto Him by sight, as the apostle exhorts us "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering unto Him."§ Can anyone imagine that between these two gatherings He will be neglectful of His flock? "He calleth His own

*Matt. xxiv. 31. †Jno. xi, 51, 52. ‡Jno. x, 16.
§2 Thess. ii, 1.

sheep by name, and leadeth them out,"* and knows them often also by the very bruises and wounds they receive on their way to meet Him in the air.

Sixth, it is a glorious arm. "Where is He that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He that put His Holy Spirit within him? that led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the waters before them to make Himself an everlasting name?"† The cross of Christ has snapped the link that bound us to this world, and "our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change the body of our humiliation into the likeness of His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."‡ We cannot suppose that on our way to the glory the good Shepherd,§ the great Shepherd,|| the chief Shepherd,¶ having such an arm will permit any suffering to come upon us, that will not make the glory the brighter in the day that will ful-

*Jno. x, 3. †Isa. lxiii, 11, 12. ‡Jno. x, 14. §Jno. x, 14.
‖Heb. xiii, 20. ¶1 Pet. v, 4.

fill the promise, "When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."*

Seventh, His arms are embracing and very tender. When He saw His disciples rebuking those who brought their little ones to Him, "He was much displeased [the only time He ever manifested His displeasure with His poor, ignorant, erring disciples], and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God. . . . And He took them up in His arms [embraced them, folded them in His arms], put His hands upon them and blessed them."† Can any sufferer doubt the love of such a Saviour? Can any one imagine that He is indifferent to the pains and sorrows which He Himself felt, and which He feels afresh in the griefs and trials of His friends and followers? In the darkest night and wildest storm He is still saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."‡

*Col. iii, 4. † Mark x, 14–16. ‡ Matt. xiv, 27.

"Then cheer thee, cheer thee, suffering saint!
Though worn with chastening, be not faint!
And though thy night of pain seem long,
Cling to thy Lord—in Him be strong;
He knows, He numbers every tear;
Not one faint sigh escapes His ear."

"What, tho' the way be rough and steep?
What, tho' we stumble as the blind?
There's joy reserved for those who weep—
The Everlasting Arms are kind.

'What matters it if sorows come?
What, though the night be dark and long?
The darkest cloud but hides the sun—
The Everlasting Arms are strong.

"What, though life's ocean surges high?
Tho' adverse winds now toss each wave?
'Be not afraid! 'tis only I'—
The Everlasting Arms can save.

"What, tho' besieged by sin and strife,
The heart and flesh but sink and quail?
'I am the Way, the Truth, the Life'—
The Everlasting Arms ne'er fail.

"Remember, flame consumes but dross;
To pure gold adds but brighter charms,
'Neath the 'blood-stained banner of the cross,
Behold the Everlasting Arms.

"In life's fierce conflict, faithful be;
'Tis only they who win the crown.
When Death disrobes mortality,
The Everlasting Arms reach down."

## CHAPTER XI.

### *Fear Not.*

These words, or their equivalent, "Be not afraid," occur at least ninety times in the Old Testament, and twenty-four times in the New. They touch every class and condition of God's people under all possible circumstances of suffering and trial. They contain a command and an exhortation, and if the one was obeyed and the other heeded, the necessity for discipline might not be avoided, but the severity of discipline would be mitigated. When smarting under the sharpest stroke, or groping through the darkest night, the voice of our Almighty Father, of our interceding High Priest, and of our ever, abiding Comforter would be distinctly recognized, sounding in our hearing and in our hearts, "Fear not," and all dread of final defeat would be instantly quelled.

The sufferer may complain that he is compelled to receive the knowledge of God's pres-

ence and help by faith alone. Very true, but he is also compelled to receive nearly all of his knowledge by faith alone. Apart from the very few incidents that have fallen under his personal observation, his knowledge of the entire history of the world he receives by faith alone. Apart from the very few persons and places he has seen, his knowledge of all the men and of all the countries and cities on the face of the earth he receives by faith alone. Apart from the very few who have investigated for themselves the secrets of God's universe, all the rest of the race must receive their knowledge of scientific discoveries by faith alone. Thousands and millions buy, and build, and plant, and sell, and sail seas, and work, wholly on the strength of their faith in what others have said; and faith never seems an absurd thing to the unbeliever until God and the Bible are mentioned. "Evidences of Christianity!" exclaims Coleridge; "I am weary of the word. Make a man feel the want of it, . . . and you may safely trust it to its own evidence."

A mother leaves her sick child, saying, "I am going into the next room, but fear not; and if you want anything call me." The

child receives the knowledge of the mother's nearness and helpfulness by faith alone, but does the fact that the mother is invisible prevent the child from calling for assistance and sympathy? Suppose the sufferer knew that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the next room listening to his sighs and interceding in his behalf; he could not fear. But heaven is only the next room, so nigh that Stephen saw Him through the opened door standing on the right hand of God,* so nigh that He spoke audibly to Saul of Tarsus,† so nigh that although He refused to permit Mary to touch Him, because He had not ascended to the Father, a few minutes later He was back on the earth, inviting her to hold Him by the feet.‡

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."§ Here the gospel is proclaimed by an angelic messenger, and all fear of the consequences of sin may be removed at once from the sufferer's

* Acts vii, 55. † Acts ix, 4. ‡ Jno. xx, 17; Matt. xxviii, 9.
§ Lu. ii, 10, 11.

mind. Since the coming and death of Christ on the cross the announcement is evermore sounding from heaven, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."* All the doing was done when He cried with His expiring breath, "It is finished;"† and now it is a question, not of struggling, but of believing on Him who "died for our sins according to the Scriptures;"‡ for "he that believeth on Him is not judged; but he that believeth not is judged already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."§ The invitation is now: "Come, for all things are NOW ready."|| Righteousness is now offered as a spotless robe to the believer: "NOW the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe."¶ Justification is now waiting on the lips of the great Judge: "Being NOW justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him,"** and "there is therefore

* 2 Cor. vi, 2. † Jno. xix, 30. ‡ 1 Cor. xv, 3. § Jno. iii, 18.
|| Lu. xiv, 17. ¶ Rom. iii, 21, 22. ** Rom. v, 9.

NOW no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."* Nearness to the throne is now the privilege of all who trust in His name: "NOW, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ."† Intercession is now presented in their behalf: Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself NOW to appear in the presence of God for us."‡ The Son's place is now their place: "Beloved, NOW are we the sons of God.§ Hark! you can hear Him saying, 'Fear not.'"

Second—His watchful providence should banish fear. "I say unto you, My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." God directs and upholds a little bird in its flight: "Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows."|| Once Paul stood on the deck of a tempest-tossed vessel amid a terrified crew, and calmly said, "There stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not,

*Rom. viii, 1. † Eph. ii, 13. ‡ Heb. ix, 26. § 1 Jno. iii, 2. || Lu. xii, 4-7.

Paul;" and to the captain and sailors he said, "There shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you." It is true that they had to swim for it, "and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land."* Once the Master lay in the hinder part of the ship asleep upon a pillow, and when a great storm of wind arose, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves, "His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."† Only trust Him, suffering and faint-hearted one, for "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven."‡

Third—If in poverty, or in loneliness, or in the midst of enemies that rob us of all our wells of earthly comfort, He is still saying, as He said to His faithful servant who refused to take from a thread even to shoe-latchet from

* Acts xxvii. † Matt. viii, 26. ‡ Ps. cvii, 29, 30.

the world, "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."* He is still saying, as He said to a weeping mother in the wilderness, waiting for the death of her child, "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is."† He is still saying, as He said to Isaac, whose herdsmen were driven away by the herdsmen of Gerar, "Fear not, for I am with thee and will bless thee."‡ He may speak roughly, as Joseph did to his brethren, in order to bring us to a sense of our sin, but He sends a message, as Joseph did by the mouth of his steward, "Peace be to you! fear not."§

Fourth—His people are sometimes led, as Israel was led, and that, too, remember, under the guidance of the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, to encamp at Pi-hahiroth, "the mouth of Caverns." Before them was a sea on which was no boat nor bridge; behind them was the army of the mightiest empire on earth, and there was no way of escape on either side. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still,

* Gen. xv, 1. † Gen. xxi, 17. ‡ Gen. xxvi, 24.
§ Gen. xliii, 23.

and see the salvation of the Lord."* Very often we fail to see the salvation of the Lord, because we do not learn to stand still, to cease from our own efforts, to cast ourselves in simple faith upon His almighty and protecting arm. Jehoshaphat, surrounded by foes, could only cry, "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." The result was a message from the prophet, "Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. . . . Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not nor be dismayed."†

Fifth—There are times when we are overwhelmed by the discovery of our own vileness in the presence of His glory, and we feel like falling with our faces toward the ground as Daniel did; while our comeliness is turned in us into corruption, and we retain no strength. But there most surely comes a voice from one like the similitude of the sons of men, "O

* Ex. xiv, 13. †2 Chron. xx, 15-17.

man greatly beloved, fear not; peace be unto thee; be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my Lord speak; for Thou hast strengthened me."* Nay, such an experience is frequently needed to fit us for service, and if this is kept in mind, the mystery of suffering will be better understood. Most of us are like Peter, who fell down at Jesus' knees under the display of His power, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But immediately came the response, "Fear not. From henceforth thou shalt catch men."† It is well if in suffering and by suffering we learn the sublime paradox of the apostle, "When I am weak then am I strong."

Sixth—The same word of cheer attends us when shuddering beneath the blow that deprives us of our children. Jairus fell at the feet of Jesus beseeching Him greatly in behalf of a little daughter lying at the point of death. But the Saviour was stopped on the road to heal a suffering woman, and during the trying delay, "there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, certain which said,

*Dan. x, 19. †Lu. v, 10.

Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe." Yes, as soon as He heard the word, for He did not wish unbelief to enter that sorrowing heart, and make the grief all the greater. Calmly He went on His way, and entering the house of mourning, He took the dead child's cold hand in His own, saying, "Rise, my darling," the pledge and the forerunner of the word He will speak to our darlings when He comes again.

Seventh—Beyond death the voice of courage and hope attends us even to the judgment seat of Christ. At His open grave the angel said unto the women, "Fear not ye," and the risen Jesus Himself said to them, "Be not afraid." The beloved disciple who leaned upon His bosom at the last supper, fell at His feet like a dead man, stricken down by the brightness of His glory on the isle of Patmos; but the Lord laid His right hand upon him, saying, "Fear not; I am the first and the last."* John never feared again. Awful

*Rev. i, 17.

judgments passed before his vision, like successive flashes of lightning, like hurrying cyclones with terrifying roll of thunder and roar of winds, but he trembled no more. The assuring touch of Jesus was upon him, and he knew that he was above the storm forever. "Herein is love with us made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is so ARE we in this world."*

Why then should we fear, though the rough waves are tossed by the tempest, when faith can behold Him walking on the sea and hear His voice, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."† Why should we shrink, when He says to us amid the tumult of the world, and the perils that beset our souls, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while."‡ He does not say Go, but Come, for Himself will be with us in our loneliness, and the place of our separation and suffering will become radiant with the beauty of His manifested presence.

*1 Jno. iv, 17. †Matt. xiv, 27. ‡Mark vi, 31.

"Shut in, shut in from the ceaseless din
Of the restless world, and its want and sin;
Shut in from its turmoil, care and strife,
And all the wearisome round of life.

"Shut in with tears that are spent in vain,
With the dull companionship of pain;
Shut in with the changeless days and hours,
And the bitter knowledge of failing powers.

"Shut in with dreams of days gone by,
With buried hopes that were born to die;
Shut in with hopes that have lost their zest,
And leave but a longing after rest.

"Shut in with a trio of angels sweet,
Patience and Grace all pain to meet,
With Faith that can suffer and stand and wait,
And lean on the promises strong and great!

"Shut in with Christ! Oh, wonderful thought!
Shut in with the peace His sufferings brought:
Shut in with the love that wields the rod;
Oh, company blest! shut in with God!"

## CHAPTER XII.

### *Songs In The Night.*

"But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?"* Elihu is here reproving Job for his self-righteousness, and he tells him that as the wickedness of man cannot dim the majesty of God, but brings ruin to the sinner, so the obedience of man cannot profit God, but it carries blessing and joy in its train, even songs in the dark night of affliction. "Therefore trust thou in Him" is the lesson he seeks to teach the sorely tried man, and it is the lesson he learned in the school of suffering, when the Lord spoke to him out of the whirlwind. "Then Job answered the Lord and said, Behold, I am vile; and what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth."†

There are many things about which sufferers may sing, if they will only turn their thoughts

*Job xxxv, 10. †Job xl, 4.

away from themselves and their distressing circumstances, and train their minds to bring before them the tender assurances of infinite love scattered through the Word. Try it some sleepless night, when racked with pain, or tossing and turning in your bed, disturbed by doubts, haunted by fears, harassed by painful recollections, tortured by gloomy forebodings or shrinking from death. Recall all you can of the life and sayings and sympathy of Jesus, remembering that "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us,"* and see if it will not quiet your agitation, like His own "Peace, be still," spoken to the storm: "for so He giveth His beloved sleep,"† and in sleep.

> "Of all the thoughts of God that are
> Borne inward unto souls afar
> Along the Psalmist's music deep,
> Now tell me if that any is,
> For gift or grace surpassing this,
> *He giveth His beloved sleep.*"

First, we may sing of His creative power in the night of sorrow, and thus catch the strains of that first music, "when the morn-

* 2 Cor. i, 20. † Ps. cxxxvii, 2.

ing stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."* It is a manifestation of power designed to give comfort to the afflicted, for the Holy Spirit expressly writes, "Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."† It is a still greater comfort to know that creation was an act of power put forth by the hand that was nailed to the cross, "for by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence."‡

Surely it is enough to call forth a song in the darkest night to understand that over the night, and in the face of the night, the Son of God reigns, "whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who, being the brightness of His glory,

* Job xxxviii, 7. † 1 Pet. iv, 19. ‡ Col. i, 16-18.

and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."* Since He who loved us unto death not only made the worlds, but upholds all things by the word of His power, it is certain that no suffering can be the portion of His people, except that which is necessary to carry out the purpose of God, "who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."† The church is the lesson book which the angels are studying, and the manifold wisdom of God, including all that He does, will be made known more through suffering than through all the other manifestations of His glory.

Second, we can sing of redemption in the night, when we can sing of nothing else. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O

*Heb. i, 2, 3. †Eph. iii, 9, 10.

ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: Shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel."* So of Israel it is said, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: and they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."† The time is coming when the covenanted promise of God shall be fulfilled: "Behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt."‡

But it is not Israel alone that shall sing. John saw the four and twenty elders in heaven, representatives of all the saved, fall down before the Lamb who still bore the marks of the sacrificial knife, "and they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou

*Isa. xliv, 22, 23. †Isa, xxxv, 10. ‡Hos. ii, 14, 15.

wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth."* Seven times in the Old Testament do we read of the new song, and although redemption's song has been sung since Abel's day, it will be new world without end.

Third, we can sing of righteousness in the dark. "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness."† Again, "they shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness."‡ So the Psalmist once more says, "My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof."§ There are not figures enough, nor musical notes enough, to celebrate the righteousness that has been fully vindicated in the salvation of God's redeemed people. No real Christian even desires to be saved at the expense of Divine righteousness, and it makes him sing for very gladness of heart to see that "Christ is the end

*Rev. v, 9,10. †Ps. li, 14. ‡Ps. cxlv, 7. §Ps. lxxi, 15.

of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,"* and that God is never more just than when He is "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."† A great sinner saved makes a great singer, and even when the night closes around him and his song is broken and hoarse with sobs, he is certain that God is righteous in all of His ways.

Fourth, we can find something to sing about in the word of God, if we will recall it when there is no light. "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."‡ "Sing unto Him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise. For the word of the Lord is right; and all His works are done in truth."§ The acceptance of His word as true must be followed by songs, as it is said of Israel, "Then they believed His words; they sang His praise."|| Hence the Psalmist, by the spirit of prophecy, exclaims, as he looks to a day that is yet future, "All the kings of the earth shall praise Thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of Thy mouth. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the

* Rom. x, 4. † Rom. iii, 26. ‡ Ps. cxix, 54. § Ps. xxxiii, 3, 4, 5. || Ps. cvi, 12.

Lord."* But even in this day to those who believe it is written, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."† None can so well afford to sing as those who know that "all Scripture [every word of the sacred writings] is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."‡

Fifth, we may sing in anticipation of the morning that shall follow the night. "His anger endureth but a moment: in His favor is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy [margin, singing] cometh in the morning."§ It was this that led the Psalmist to say, "The Lord will command His loving kindness in the day time, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life."‖ At another time his spirit was overwhelmed, and he bitterly complained, "My

*Ps. cxxxviii, 4. †Col. iii, 16. ‡2 Tim. iii, 16, 17.
§Ps. xxx, 5. ‖Ps. xlii, 8.

sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted." But even then he adds, "I call to remembrance my song in the night."* We can scarcely imagine a more trying position than that of two servants of Christ in a strange and heathen land, with bleeding backs gashed by the Roman lash, thrust into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks; but, at "midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God."† The nightingale sings at night, and most sweetly, it is said, when the thorn pierces its breast.

Sixth, there is to be a wonderful song in the morning of the resurrection. "Thy dead men shall live, together with My dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."‡ The lark sings most loudly and sweetly the higher it ascends, and when no longer visible from the earth it floods the skies with its joyful melody, as we, too, shall do when caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air.§ Then shall roll around redeemed creation the shout and song of

*Ps. lxxvii. 2, 6. †Acts xvi, 25. ‡Isa. xxvii, 19.
§1 Thess. iv, 17.

triumph, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"*

Seventh, this, of course, leads to the song of the bride, "My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land."† She shall have a great leader of her song, for her glorious Bridegroom says to the Father, "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee."‡ Her warfare accomplished, and her victory achieved, her song shall blend harmoniously with the song of the elect of Israel standing on "a sea of glass mingled with fire." It is glass, because the mystery of suffering will then be clear; it is of fire, because they have come up through the great tribulation under Antichrist. "And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of nations."§ The sea is so bright that it reflects His glory, in which we

*1 Cor. xv, 55. †Song ii, 10-12. ‡Heb. ii, 12. §Rev. xv, 3.

shall shine for ever and ever, while we shall sing for ever and ever of Him who brought us out of night into everlasting light.

During a recent conversation with a Christian lady in her own home, concerning the King, there suddenly floated through the room a strain of exquisite music. It was a succession of notes from a master's composition, and the tones were exceedingly rich and delicious. Turning the head to discover the source of the charming melody, it was found to proceed from a beautiful little bird in a cage. "How," it was asked, "was he taught to sing so sweetly?" "He was placed in the night," the lady replied, "beside a fine music-box, and learned to imitate the sounds he heard in the dark." Thus Jesus teaches His own to sing.

"There's One who once walked in the darkness,
Forsaken and all alone,
And He left there a voice of singing,
Which He giveth to His own.
He giveth! Ah! yes, He giveth—
You can read the mystery now;
For *He* strikes the joyous key-note,
Where circling seraphs bow.

"Is the midnight closing round you?
Are the shadows dark and long?
Ask Him to come close beside you,
And He'll give you a new, sweet song.
He'll give it, and sing it with you;
And when weakness lets it down,
He'll take up the broken cadence,
And blend it with His own.

"And many a rapturous minstrel
Among those sons of light,
Will say of His sweetest music.
'I learned it in the night.'
And many a rolling anthem
That fills the Father's home,
Sobbed out its first rehearsal,
In the shade of a darken'd room."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### *Afterward.*

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."* It would not be a chastening at all unless it was grievous, and Christians make a great mistake if they imagine that the Lord expects them to meet the sufferings of life with stoical indifference, or to remain unmoved under the strokes of His rod. He knows that the rod will sting and wound, and in order to alleviate the pain, He bids us look beyond the present affliction to the long afterward that follows.

An humble and godly man once came with his wife to a servant of the Lord, and informed him that he was about to undergo a severe and dangerous surgical operation as the only means

*Heb. xii, 11.

of saving his life. He stated that he was not afraid of death, for God had given him the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ; but his wife and ten children, all of whom were girls, the youngest not six months old and the eldest not sixteen years, were dependent upon him for support, and it seemed to be necessary for him to live for their sakes. So it seemed to the minister, and he never prayed with more fervor or faith that his brother might be spared. At the close of a season of very earnest supplication all three arose from their knees, confident that their request would be granted.

A few days later the operation was performed, and at once it became apparent that he could not survive. The pastor called to see him, and noticed that his face had a sad and disappointed look. "What do you think," he asked him, "of the promise of God, that though no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby?" He replied that the verse had greatly troubled him, for he could not see how

his sore chastening could yield him any peaceable fruit during the little time remaining to him on earth. "But why," inquired his friend, "do you limit the 'afterward' to the little time remaining on earth? It stretches through everlasting years, and you will be gathering precious fruit from the tree watered with your tears while eternity endures." He soon fell asleep calmly and even joyfully, and by a strange and unexpected providence of God, his family were immediately placed in far more comfortable circumstances than they could have been had he continued among them.

It often occurs, and it has been gratefully acknowledged ten thousand times, that the chastening yieldeth peaceable fruit in the afterward of this present life, and it is sure to do it in the life to come. The fruit of the battle won is speedy peace, and if the victory is decisive it is endless. This peace is for those "who are exercised thereby," the original word containing an allusion to Grecian athletes, who stripped themselves naked that they might put forth all their strength in their public games, and so win the wreath of immortality. With the utmost confidence it may be said, that if

God did not see an absolute necessity for such a desperate struggle on the part of His beloved children, the chastening should never smite them.

"This weed? This stone? It is thy heart;
It must be crushed by pain and smart,
It must be cleansed by sorrow's art—
Ere it will yield a fragrance sweet,
Ere it will shine a jewel meet
To lay before thy dear Lord's feet."

The deluge that swept around Noah brought out the rainbow of promise.* Abraham's offering up of Isaac made his seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sands upon the sea shore.† Jacob's halting thigh caused him to see God's face as the sun rose upon him.‡ Joseph's prison was the doorway to Pharaoh's palace.§ Moses' grief over Israel's sin led God to speak to him face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.‖ Job was stripped of all that he had, that in the end the Lord might give him twice as much as he had before.¶ David was like a hunted partridge in the mountains, that he might become the sweet Psalmist of Israel to the saints

*Gen. ix. †Gen. xxii. ‡Gen. xxxii. §Gen. xli.
‖Ex. xxxiii. ¶Job. xlii.

of all succeeding generations.* Manasseh's chain was worth more to him than Manasseh's crown.† Daniel's captivity made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon.‡ Esther's exposure to death saved a nation.§ Peter was girded and carried whither he would not, that he should glorify God.|| Paul's head fell beneath Nero's axe that there might be placed upon it an unfading chaplet;¶ and as an old Puritan writer has said, "the stones that came about Stephen's ears did but knock him closer to Christ."**

Thus it always has been, thus it always is, with those of whom God thinks enough to use them in His service; and the mystery of suffering begins to clear up when we see that there is a certain and most intimate relation between it and the glory that shall follow. So common is the affliction of Christians, that heaven has been described as a hospital at one end and a palace at the other; and our place in the palace will depend upon the ward, and the character of the trials and the spirit in which they were borne, while we are at this

*2 Sam. xxiii. †2 Chron. xxxiii. ‡Dan. ii. §Est. iv. ||Jno. xxi. ¶2 Tim. iv. **Acts vii.

end. This is no conjecture nor theory, but the plain testimony of the inspired Scriptures to which every sufferer should give heed.

It is the law of the kingdom from which there is no exemption, that we must follow the pathway leading to the cross if we would reach the crown shining in the great afterward of God. It is His law in nature, in providence and in grace, and His intelligent children would not escape it if they could. It is the way the Master took, and surely "it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord."* Hence we must know "the fellowship of His sufferings."

"'Tis first the true, and then the beautiful,
Not first the beautiful and then the true;
First the wild moor, with rock, and reed, and pool,
Then the gay garden rich in scent and hue.

"'Tis first the good, and then the beautiful,
Not first the beautiful, and then the good;
First the rough seed, sown in rougher soil,
Then the flower blossom, or the branching wood.

"Not first the glad, and then the sorrowful,
But first the sorrowful, and then the glad;
Tears for a day, for earth of tears is full,
Then we forget that we were ever sad.

*Matt. x, 25.

"Not first the bright, and after that the dark,
But first the dark and after that the bright;
First the thick cloud, and then the rainbow's arc,
First the dark grave, then resurrection light.

"'Tis first the night, stern night of storm and war,
Long night of heavy clouds and veiled skies;
Then the far sparkle of the Morning Star,
That bids the saints awake, and dawn arise."

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."* Language has no meaning unless this teaches that affliction itself, of course of the believer, worketh out the everlasting and exceeding glory. As Dr. Charles Hodge has truly said, "Afflictions are the cause of eternal glory. Not the meritorious cause, but still the procuring cause. God has seen fit to reveal His purpose not only to reward with exceeding joy the afflictions of His people, but to make those afflictions the means of working out that joy. This doctrine is taught in many passages of Scripture, Matt. xix, 29; Rom. viii, 17; 2 Tim. ii, 12, 13; 1 Pet. i, 6; iv, 13; Rev. vii. 14." Paul had been "in stripes above measure, in prisons again and again, in deaths oft; of the Jews

*2 Cor. iv, 17.

five times he received forty stripes save one, thrice he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned, thrice he suffered shipwreck, a night and a day he was in the deep, in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."*

Do you call these things light, Paul? Yes, in contrast with the weight of the afterward? Were they but for a moment? Yes, in contrast with the eternity of the afterward. They only led him to cry out, "From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." They were the brands of Christ's ownership, and he well knew that in the great afterward that rolls across a sea of boundless glory, every scar would add a star to the crown of his rejoicing. Hence in each affliction he could say, as he wrote to the Philippians from his prison in Rome, "I know

*2 Cor. xi, 23-27.

that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ,"* the word for supply being taken from the office of the Choregus, whose calling it was to supply the chorus at his own expense, with all needed refreshments and ornaments, while they went on their way singing, without an anxious thought.

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy [margin, singing] cometh in the morning,"† the afterward morning, that has no cloud and no evening. In the light of that glorious morning the mystery of suffering will be fully explained, and we shall be as the people were when Jesus was upon the earth, "beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well."‡ In the brightness of His presence it will be seen that infinite wisdom directed every step of the suffering Christian, and unchanging love attended upon every sorrow. There is a difference between life and a crown of life, between righteousness and a crown of righteousness, between glory and a crown of glory; and no brow shall bear a crown of glory that has not first worn a crown of thorns. In-

*Phil. i, 19. † Ps. xxx, 5. ‡ Mark vii, 37.

deed, our Lord's estimate of the greatness of a disciple, in the hereafter we must so soon enter, will be based, not so much upon what he has done, as upon what he has meekly and patiently suffered. He is still saying of every chosen vessel, as He said of Paul, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake."* Let us wait.

"What shall Thine 'afterward' be, O Lord,
For this dark and suffering night?
Father, *what* shall Thine 'afterward' be?
Hast Thou a morning of joy for me,
And a new and joyous light?

"What shall Thine 'afterward' be, O Lord,
For the moan that I cannot stay?
Shall it issue in some new song of praise,
Sweeter than sorrowless heart could raise,
When the night hath passed away?

"What shall Thine 'afterward' be, O Lord,
For this helplessness of pain?
A clearer view of my home above,
Of my Father's strength and my Father's love—
Shall this be my lasting gain?

"What shall Thine 'afterward' be, O Lord,
How long must Thy child endure?
Thou knowest! 'Tis well that I know it not!
Thine 'afterward' cometh—I cannot tell what,
But I *know* that Thy word is *sure.*

* Acts ix, 16.

"What shall Thine 'afterward' be, O Lord
I wonder and wait to see
(While to Thy chastening Hand I bow),
What 'peaceable fruit' may be ripening now—
Ripening fast for me."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### *"Till He Come."*

Rev. John Ker, D. D., beautifully says of the second and personal coming of our Lord, "It is in the New Testament the great event that towers above every other. The heaven that gives back Christ gives back all that we have loved and lost, solves all doubts, and ends all sorrows. His coming looks in upon the whole life of His church, as a lofty mountain peak looks in upon every little valley and sequestered home around its base, and belongs to them all alike. Every generation lies under the shadow of it, for whatever is transcendently great is constantly near, and in moments of high conviction it absorbs petty interests and annihilates intervals."

It is impossible to overestimate the damage that has followed the substitution of death, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, or at any other time, the destruction of

Jerusalem or any other providential event, for the one definite and blessed hope of our Lord's literal and personal return. It is a hope which shines out in one verse of every twenty-five in the New Testament, and in scores and hundreds of passages in the Old Testament; but such substitution has totally obscured it to the view of the vast majority of His followers now living. It is specially difficult to estimate aright the injury that has been inflicted upon suffering Christians by the unwarranted substitution. They are left to look forward to death as the only escape from pain, to the grave as the only refuge from grief, when both death and the grave, say what we please, are horrible and hateful.

If this is not so, why does Jehovah exclaim, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction?"* Why is it said, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death?"† It is not a friend, therefore, but an enemy. Why is it written, "Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire?"‡ Why are we told that as Jesus was on His way to the grave of Lazurus "He groaned in the spirit," or

*Hos. xiii, 14. †1 Cor. xv, 26. ‡Rev. xx, 14.

rather shuddered with indignation, "and troubled Himself?"* If we entered more into His thoughts and feelings about death, it would be far better than to copy the sentiments and imitate the example of ancient heathen philosophers and stoics, who affected to sneer at a foe they knew to be irresistible, and determined to encounter the inevitable courageously. Death in any form is dreadful and loathsome; and when we think of the havoc it has wrought, of the homes it has desolated, of the hearts it has broken, we can rejoice that the time is surely coming when it shall be cast with the antichrist and with Satan into the lake of fire.

Not with the prospect of death did our Lord seek to comfort His troubled disciples when he said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself."† Not of death did he speak when, after foretelling the death of Peter, He said concerning John, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die, but if I will

*Jno. xi, 33. †Jno. xiv, 3.

that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"* It was not of death that the two men in white testified after the bodily, literal, personal and visible ascension of our Lord into Heaven, when they said to the disciples, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."† It was not of death the apostle wrote when he announced by the Spirit, "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."‡ Nor when he told his brethren, sorrowing over the loss of their dear ones, that the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, that those who sleep in Him shall come forth from the grave, and "then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."§

The Holy Ghost never calls our attention to

* Jno. xxi, 22, 23. † Acts i, 9-11. ‡ 1 Thess. i, 9, 10.
§ 1 Thess. iv, 17, 18.

death as the certain end before us, and therefore as the only relief from suffering, but to that which delivers the dead from death, which guards the living against the approach of death, which swallows up death in victory. "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep."* "Looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ."† "Unto them that look for him shall He appear the second time, without sin unto salvation."‡ "Be patient, therefore, brethren, [margin, suffer with long patience] unto the coming of the Lord."§ Whatever imaginary meaning men may choose to give to such statements, the language of Scripture is plain and explicit in bidding us watch for the personal return of our Lord; and as Archbishop Trench well says, "It is a necessary element of the doctrine concerning the second coming of Christ, that it should be possible at any time, that no generation should consider it improbable in theirs." Thus the suffering ones are lifted up above the thought of the gloomy grave as they sweetly sing:

*1 Cor. xv, 51. †Tit. ii, 13. ‡Heb. ix, 28. §Jas. v, 7.

"Clouds and darkness round us press;
Would we have one sorrow less?
All the sharpness of the cross,
All that tells the world is loss,
Death and darkness, and the tomb,
Pain us only, *Till He come!*"

Even Dr. David Brown, who has written very earnestly against "that blessed hope," says of those who hold the pre-millennial view of our Lord's return, "with them we affirm that the REDEEMER'S SECOND APPEARING IS THE VERY POLESTAR OF THE CHURCH. That it is so held forth in the New Testament is beyond dispute;" and he declares that to put the expectation of one's death in place of the prospect of Christ's appearing, is to dislocate a beautiful jointing in divine truth, to destroy one of its finest collocations . . . . . To the first coming we look *back* by *faith;* to the second we look *forward* by *hope* . . . . . These are the two *pivots* on which turns the Christian's life—the two *wings* on which believers mount up as eagles. If either is clipped, the soul's flight heavenward is low, feeble, and fitful." A greater than he has said, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not at

what hour your Lord doth come."* It may be "at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning;"† but it is certain, and it may be soon.

Even if the doctrine of a spiritual millennium is true, if there is to be a gradual increase of the influence and power of the church, until all nations are converted, there could be no millennium worthy of the name. It is supposed that, owing to the universal prevalence of righteousness, wars will cease, murders and vices will disappear, epidemics will yield to the force of science, and hence the population of the earth will be vastly increased. But the travailing throes of motherhood will continue; the sickness and moaning and dying of little children, weighting down the spirit of the parents like lead, will continue; the bitter cold of winter and the burning heat of summer will continue; the pangs of hunger, and the sweat of toil, and the hardships of poverty, and the infirmities of old age, and the shadows upon darkened homes, and the sobs heard over new-made graves, will continue; and the sufferings of life be multiplied a thousand fold. Many a

* Matt. xxiv, 42. † Mark xiii, 35.

breaking heart would cry out in despair, O God, bring this dreadful millennium to a speedy end!

Not so do the inspired Scriptures speak of the time when "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick;"* when "the wilderness, and the solitary place, shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose;"† when "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox."‡ Creation, smitten with the curse of sin, is represented as standing with outstretched neck, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, but it shall groan no more when the redemption of our bodies is accomplished at the second coming of our Lord.§ This scene differs widely from the common conception of the millennium; and it is blessed to know that there is no necessary interval between the passing moment and the shining of the glory.

*Isa. xxxiii, 24. †Isa. xxxv, 1. ‡Isa. xi, 6, 7. §Rom. viii, 19, 23.

Take courage, then, tried children of God, oppressed by sadness, enfeebled by sickness, burdened with sorrow, worn with suffering; "for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."* What a little while is in his estimation we cannot know, but we know that He regards "a thousand years as one day,"† and hence it has not been two days, as time is reckoned in heaven, since he ascended from the Mount of Olives. It may not be one day of twenty-four hours before you hear His glad shout, summoning you from your bed of pain, summoning your beloved ones from the tomb, summoning his tired saints from the wearisome journey of life. Then you will have a body "fashioned like unto his glorious body."‡ Then you will be so beautiful the Holy Ghost exclaims in admiration, "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" Until you can lean upon Him in the day of your espousals, let your desire be expressed in the prayer of the bride, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm,"§ the place of security, the

* Heb. x, 37. † 2 Pet. iii, 8. ‡ Phil. iii, 21.
§ Song, viii, 5, 6.

place of His infinite love and omnipotent power, and rest thus in calm confidence.

"Content to walk in paths of His own choosing,
Since He will hold thy hand along the way;
Content to know that thou art journeying homeward,
And brighter grows the pilgrim's path each day."

It may be night about you now, but "the night is far spent, the day is at hand."* Three times in the last chapter of the Bible does the Saviour repeat the sweet promise, "Behold, I come quickly;" "Behold, I come quickly;" "Surely I come quickly;"† and all we have to do, all we can do, is to look up and wait and watch with the cry upon our lips and in our hearts, "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!" The dark mystery of suffering will then be so clear, we will wonder at ourselves that we ever complained or doubted for an instant. What is a bitter drop to a boundless sea of bliss? What is a second of pain to an eternity of glory? We may inquire with Daniel, and, like him, inquire in vain, for an explanation of perplexing providences, and for fuller knowledge, but at the time of the end when Jesus comes, every

* Rom. xiii, 12. † Rev. xxii, 7, 12, 20.

sorrow here shall shine with a strange luster, every suffering endured on earth shall be an advanced step up the everlasting hills; "and there shall be no night there."

If we had no other reason for watching, it ought to be enough for His followers and friends to know that He bids them watch with girded loins, and burning lights, and hand upon the hall door waiting for His return. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching."

"So I am watching quietly
Every day.
Whenever the sun shines brightly,
I rise and say,
'Surely it is the shining of His face!'
And look unto the gates of His high place
Beyond the sea;
For I know He is coming shortly
To welcome me.
And when a shadow falls across the window
Of my room,
Where I am working my appointed task,
I lift my head to watch the door, and ask
If He has come;
And the angel answers softly,
In my home,
'Only a few more shadows,
And He will come.'"

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Brookes, James Hall
The mystery of suffering

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